



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY AND PSYCHODRAMA

# ASGPP Tele'Gram

April - May 2020

TELE'GRAM

Since June, 2018

**"We sought a 'technique of freedom', a technique of balancing the spontaneous social forces to the greatest possible harmony and unity of all. (Moreno, J.L. (1953). *Who Shall Survive?*, NY, Beacon House, pp.x1, xli, p.8)**

Dear ASGPP Members,

Welcome to the combined April - May 2020 Tele'gram!

*The Tele'gram has been issued at the beginning of each month since June 2018. The unforeseen circumstances that we all faced, led to the need for this issue to be combined for the months of April and May 2020. This issue is about how we all applied those principals during the past 5 weeks.*

The March 2020 Tele'gram issue was sent to all of you with detailed information on the planned 78th ASGPP Conference, that was to be held at the beginning of April in the Chicago area. ASGPP leadership, committees, the national office, the designer and the volunteers all worked since the previous conference to create another unforgettable event. Registrations were piling up. Venue arrangements and program were done. And then ...

... Coronavirus showed up in our social and personal lives, very suddenly and quickly. Within days everything developed such that, still in disbelief, we needed to change what we were accustomed to; and to abandon what we had been planning and expecting to happen. Leaving the comfort of our well established cultural conserves, without time for a sufficient warm up, we needed to jump into spontaneity, to push ourselves creatively, in order to move into the 'new normal' and to 'survive'. To say that this was not easy for any of us, and for our organization as a whole, is probably an understatement. However, it took us all to a higher level of seeing and supporting each other; and being and staying connected.

## **THE CONFERENCE CANCELLATION:**

On March 11, 2020 the Executive Council announced the cancellation of the 78th ASGPP Annual Conference, as a result of a State of Emergency issued by the State of Illinois. Our priority at that time was the health and safety of our community and membership. Prior to that, the Leadership Committee, the National Office and the Executive Council had been actively monitoring the pandemic situation with Coronavirus; considering all risks; negotiating contracts and seeking legal advice.

## **THE FINANCIAL RISKS & THE DECISIONS MADE:**

Just a year and a half ago ASGPP found itself in dire financial straits. With a lot of

hard work, reduced spending and conservative budgeting, we were able to get the organization back on its feet. The annual conference is the main source of income and determines the financial stability of our organization each year; registrations for this year's conference were strong. Canceling this event could potentially take us back to where we were only 18 months ago financially or put us in an even worse position.

The only way for the organization to survive was for us to offer several options to those registered for the conference. Options included; full credit towards future conference participation, receiving a partial refund with the balance of the registration fees applied to offset conference costs, a partial refund and a partial donation to the organization, and finally applying full credit towards the 2022 Conference. While the options offered were not optimal for our community, we also have to make up the income for the many participants who opted to transfer their full registration towards a future conference. But we hoped that we would have time to organize virtual events and to have some additional fundraising events ... We were working around the clock, meeting daily, negotiating payments we needed to make; we did consider all options; and it was clear that the offered solutions were the only viable options. We also knew that only by being together in solidarity would we be able to sustain the ASGPP. We want to thank all of our members who supported us and ASGPP in this difficult process!

### **THE VIRTUAL EVENTS THAT WE OFFERED:**

We knew the loss of seeing our colleagues and friends at the annual conference could deeply sadden us. We wanted to create alternative ways to communicate and stay connected. We offered our members the following opportunities:

1. The Executive Council offered **3-Hour Sociodrama Experiential Sessions** via ZoomRoom Conferencing for SEVEN (7) groups including ASGPP members and those who were registered for the conference. Due to the large number of submitted requests to attend the workshops, a team of respected socio-dramatists & trainers stepped in to help direct (alphabetically): *Antonina Garcia, Cathy Nugent, Daniela Simmons, Dena Baumgartner, Linda Condon, Rebecca Walters, and Tian Dayton*. The Executive Council would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the directors, the session assistants, the national office and all participants for this amazing week of connecting, trusting and supporting each other!
2. An online **Emotional Support Group** was offered immediately after the conference cancelation, currently held every Monday evening. The group began with *Peter Pitzele, PhD & Daniela Simmons, PhD, TEP* on March 16, 2020. The overwhelming response resulted in ASGPP offering five (5) support groups each month with two co-facilitators per group and a special theme. We want to thank everyone who stepped up to help in the months of April & May: (alphabetically) *Colleen Baratka, Dave Moran, Deb Karner, Herb Proper, Janell Adair, Jennie Kristel, Joshua Lee, Judy Freed, Karen Carnabucci, Katrena Hart, Lorelei Goldman, Pamela Goffman, Paula De Franco, Peter Pitzele, Rebecca Walter, Rhona Case; Steven Gordon*. Also thank you to all who have already stated their willingness to facilitate support groups in the months to come. If someone would like to offer their help, please contact our national office at [asgpp@asgpp.org](mailto:asgpp@asgpp.org)
3. **Online membership meeting & celebrating the 99th birthday of psychodrama!** The Annual Membership Meeting was originally scheduled to take place at the 78th Conference of ASGPP. Also, at the Conference Welcome Reception scheduled for April 1st we were to celebrate the 99th Birthday of Psychodrama. Due to the conference cancellation, the Executive Council invited all members to attend an **ONLINE MEMBERSHIP MEETING & a celebration** on April 1, 2020. A very large group met in the ZoomRoom to discuss, support, and have a virtual Birthday cake together

(singing took place, too).

4. **Friday night social hour:** Stop by every Friday from 7:30-8:30 pm eastern and join our Admin, *Paula De Franco*, for social hour where connecting, laughing, and discussing something, or, nothing at all is the objective. Each week brings an invited guest co-facilitator. Thank you to *Carole Oliver, Darlene Vanchura, and Rhona Case* for their spontaneity and creativity in co-facilitating the social hours.
5. **International Tele'café:** After a pause and acknowledgement of the disappointment of not physically meeting for the Tele'Café live in Chicago, we moved on to our April meeting. Our host for the April Tele'Café was the Chair of the International Committee, Mark Wentworth, Zooming in from the East Coast of the UK.
6. In addition, we encouraged everyone to stay connected with their social circles through Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media; or by phone. If you need assistance in learning how to use any of those resources, please send an email to the national office at [asgpp@asgpp.org](mailto:asgpp@asgpp.org). Paula De Franco has been helping many ASGPP members to use technology in order to stay connected.

### WHAT IS IN THE FUTURE?

The Executive Council is in the process of planning a series of online events - training, social, etc., to be announced soon.

Janell Adair entered the role of treasurer on April 1, 2020 at the online membership meeting. She has accounting experience and was treasurer from 2009-2017. Since 2018 the treasurer has handled all financial matters, including; budget creation, banking, invoicing, bill payment and accounting. Rhona Case takes on the duties of Secretary.

On April 13, 2020 we announced the appointment of Deborah Shaddy, TEP as ASGPP Vice President until April 2021. Deb served diligently for two full terms on the Council, and she is bringing her warmth, professionalism and enthusiasm to us. The Executive Council is excited to be working with her!

Uneeda Brewer was elected to serve on the Executive Council, and John Skandalis was reelected as an executive council member for another term.

### FROM THE ASGPP COMMITTEES:

#### \* From the FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE:

The fundraising committee is dedicated to increasing ASGP fundraising going forward Co-chairs Aide Hernandez and Shelley Firestone continue active discussions about future campaigns, significantly increasing scholarship availability, and securing donations to ensure the ongoing viability and legacy of ASGPP. We are grateful for generous donations from birthday donations, registration funds, website contributions, and our Facebook and Go Fund Me campaigns. We have begun integrating our list of all donors in 2020 from different donation streams...please add your name!

#### \* From the RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

The Research Committee is planning to move the cancelled 2020 Conference International Research Panel on evidence based Psychodrama and Psychotherapy to the 2022 ASGPP Conference in Chicago. Its focus will be on honoring David Kipper's legacy. We would also like to bring everyone's attention to two exciting upcoming journal special editions: one on Social Work with Groups and psychodrama and secondly, the *Frontiers in Psychology* journal on the Psychological Benefits of the Arts. Email [Scott@SGiacomucci.com](mailto:Scott@SGiacomucci.com) for more information or to join the committee.

\* **From the MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:**

We are excitedly looking forward to the grand opening of our new ASGPP website. Specifically, the membership sign-up process has been completely streamlined and members no longer have to go through a two-step process to join! What this means, is that the membership committee can shift the focus from what was a cumbersome process on the back end, to a more hands-on activity, such as getting to know our new members and reconnecting with current members.

\* \* \*

**A personal note from the ASGPP President:** I want to give heartfelt thanks to all current Executive Council members,(alphabetically): Aida Hernandez, Carol Feldman Bass, Deborah Shaddy, Janell Adair, John Skandalis, Mark Wentworth, Rhona Case, Ron Collier, Scott Giacomucci, Uneeda O. Brewer; also our office administrator, Paula De Franco & our graphic designer, Patty Phelps for the long hours and their tremendous efforts supporting ASGPP during these difficult times. I am fortunate to be working with this amazing team!

Sincerely,  
Daniela Simmons

The TELE'GRAM Editors,  
Daniela Simmons, PhD, TEP  
Patty Phelps, PhD  
ASGPP Executive Council: [www.asgpp.org/pdf/Ex%20Council%202019-20%20R.pdf](http://www.asgpp.org/pdf/Ex%20Council%202019-20%20R.pdf)

*P.S. The name Tele'Gram (with apostrophe between Tele & Gram) was created to provide an original meaning and the J.L. Moreno term of 'tele' - "An inter-personal experience, growing out from person to person ... and gradually developing the sense for inter-personal relations". The term 'telegram' is an Americanism dating back to the mid-1800s and comes from the Greek tête, "at a distance" and gram, "something written". (Moreno J.L. & Jennings H.H. (1938), Statistics of Social Configurations. Sociometry. 1. P. 363)*

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