

## Special Topic:

Special Open Symposium  
Great East Japan Earthquake of  
March 11th, 2011

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## Special Topic: Special Open Symposium - Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11th, 2011: Child Rescue, Adults' Responsibility



## Introduction

On July 15, 2011, at International Christian University (ICU), Japan, an open symposium titled "The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11th, 2011: Child Rescue, Adults' Responsibility" was held, organized by the Institute for Advanced Studies of Clinical Psychology (IASCP), ICU, and co-organized by the International Association of Dynamic Psychotherapy. The organizer of this symposium was Professor Hidefumi Kotani of IASCP, ICU. One panelist was invited to the symposium from Sendai, a disaster area of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and one from New York, where the 9.11 terrorist attacks occurred. One of the panelists, Dr. Fumio Yonekawa, the director of "Komatsushima Kodomo-no-ie," a short-term treatment facility for children with emotional disturbance in Sendai City, told us what he thought during the first three days of the earthquake. The other panelist, Dr. Seth Aronson, presented theories and practice in trauma treatment. Four discussants told of their experiences from their respective professions. They were Dr. Kazuki Nishiura, a psychologist and professor of Miyagi-Gakuin Women's University, who engaged in psychological first aid in the disaster area; Dr. Shiori Usami, a psychiatric nurse and professor of Kumamoto University, who engaged in victim support activities in the disaster area; Professor Masahiro Nishikawa, a clinical psychologist and associate professor of IASCP ICU, who is a member of the IASCP Task Force of Mutual-and-Child-Aid started soon after the 3.11 East Japan Great earthquake; and Mr. Seisuke Nakamura, a former newspaper journalist in Fukuoka and the Executive Director of Fukuoka Kasuga City Culture Circle. Many participants of the symposium were clinical psychologists, and there were also citizens from areas around Tokyo, people who joined volunteer activities for the victims, and students of ICU, and they participated in the discussion.

In this volume of the IASCP Newsletter, we reported on this symposium, focusing on the presentation of the panelists and discussants. Staffs of the Psychological Consulting Services at IASCP summarized each presentation, and they have shared their experiences from the symposium.

(Editor: Toshinori Hanai)

## First and Continuing Aid for Children in the Great East Japan Earthquake

*Fumio Yonekawa, Ph.D., Director, Komatsushima Kodomo-no-ie (A short-term treatment facility for children with emotional disturbance), Sendai, Japan*  
*Reporter: Toshinori Hanai, IASCP*

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Dr. Yonekawa is the director of a short-term treatment facility for children with emotional disturbance "Komatsushima Kodomo-no-ie" in Sendai City, East Japan., and he experienced Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11th, 2011. In this symposium, he mentioned his idea that what he thought during the first 3 days of earthquake when he had protected children's lives as a director.

In first, he stated his idea of crisis management. After the earthquake, many people gathered together in crowds. However, being a crowd makes difficult to deal with crisis, and resolve no problems. In emergency, it is important that people disperse and be within, and it requires group formation that is based on each individual's ability and action. And Also, he said the importance of seeking

luck in crisis. Every members of his institution were safe. The earthquake happened not in deep of winter, but in coming of spring. Electricity stopped, but it enabled us to the stars twinkling in the beautiful night sky. These were luck in crisis.

Next, he mentioned about Japanese family value. After the earthquake, many people, especially young people, emphasized the importance of family ties. However, when they stated importance of family ties, their kindness was limited to their family, and was not delivered to their neighbors. He thought this limitation is strong in Japanese mind. If people offer a helping hand to neighbors in trouble as well as family, Japanese family will be open to community, society.

## A leader of Psychological Child Aid New York following 9/11

*Seth Aronson, Psy.D., Faculty, William Alanson White Institute; President, William Alanson White Psychoanalytic Society, New York, U.S.A.*  
*Reporter: Yoshiko Sasaki, IASCP*

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In understanding and intervening for traumatized children, it is important for therapists to grasp the whole picture of the children and their environment.

It is necessary to assess the traumatized children's ability to cope with trauma internally and externally, their development level, whether or not there were stressors in their daily lives before the traumatic event, whether or not there are caretakers to nurture them, and the length of time and the size of the trauma.

We need to be aware of the following four areas of reaction in children after a traumatic event.

First, there is a re-experiencing of the trauma such as having nightmares and flashbacks.

Second, there are avoidant behaviors such as withdrawal from school and separation anxiety. In severe cases, there may be amnesia and/or dissociation.

The third is hyperarousal. Traumatized children have difficulty concentrating, easily get angry, are hypervigilant to others, or have heightened startle responses.

Fourth, representations of self and others change. These changes affect the traumatized children's identities and identifications.

It is necessary for caretakers to make a safe space in which they can talk with their children about the traumatic events and their reactions.

Lastly, as a therapist, it is very important to help the family and children find meaning through the traumatic events, and help them take a step closer bit by bit to the things which they kept away from their minds because they are threatening. By doing so, traumatized children will progress in their work of recovery and reach reconciliation.

### Reporter's Comment

I listened to the lecture of Professor Aronson, which was very impressive and helpful.

I noticed that when he provides therapy for traumatized children, he goes back and forth between looking at a specific point from a larger view, and looking at the whole picture from a specific fact. I learned that this atti-

tude which he conveyed is very important in therapy. I could picture the traumatized children recovering and growing through the therapist's understanding and interventions, and his being there for them. I felt the hope that the children can find meaning through the traumatic events and that the process of recovery and reconciliation moves on.

## Psychological first aid — a view from Europe

*Kazuki Nishiura, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Developmental and Clinical Studies, Miyagi Gakuin Women's University, Sendai, Japan; Visiting Professor, Linköping University, Sweden*  
*Reporter: Chow Tsz Ying, IASCP*

Dr. Nishiura of the Miyagi Gakuin Women's University gave a lecture in the symposium about the situation after the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster with pictures of the affected districts, and the psychological first aid put into effect.

Dr. Nishiura pointed out the key point required in the first aid after an earthquake disaster. He emphasized that the initial response of caretakers was crucial and that the reaction of children relies on it. As Dr. Seth Aronson had also mentioned in his previous presentation, the existence of attachment object means a great deal for children, and so the first aid by the nursery staff with the possibility of spending longer time with the children than parents was crucial. Therefore, he developed a guide book of PFA for professionals working with children ("Psychological First Aid for childcare worker -abridged edition-" and "Psychological First Aid for social worker-abridged edition-"). He thought it was important to make a guide of

PFA that could easily be understood even by university students, so that it enabled busy professionals to read in their spare time and put it to use.

Dr. Nishiura addressed that there are two points that needs to be concerned in regard of future support. One, is to put into consideration the viewpoint of development and second, the national policy. To create a new system that involves the administration, board of education, schools, and homes is needed in addition to individual approach.

Now, Dr. Nishiura living in Sweden reported the present situation there, that before, they were able to hold classes for learning Japanese whenever they called out, but after the earthquake, not enough students respond to open these classes. However, their interest in Japanese culture seems not to have ceased and that he feels hope in this.

### Reporter's Comment

It was very impressive that Professor Nishiura repeatedly mentioned the importance of regarding "what to do in a crisis". It turned out that being able to question "what to do in a crisis" in the present is a very important point in the crisis intervention of psychological first aid. Alt-

hough the question means only the starting point of an individual, to stand at the starting point and creating hope to standing up again by uniting not just the whole country but also with the world is thought to have a great meaning as well.

## A perspective from the vantage point of psychiatric nursing

*Shiori Usami, Ph.D., Professor, Graduate School of Health Science, Kumamoto University, Kumamoto, Japan*  
*Reporter: Toshinori Hanai, IASCP*

Dr. Shiori Usami is a professor at the School of Health Science, of Kumamoto University., She engages in the education of psychiatric nurses, as well as practicing in the psychiatric hospital as a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). In the symposium, she reported on her victim support activities in the aftermath of the great earthquake of March 11th, and highlighted problems in current psychiatric nursing in victim support activities.

She reported included; victim support activities in the disaster area for victims who have PTSR (posttraumatic stress reaction) ; support for nurses who were sent to the disaster area as a member of the support team and returned with PTSR; cultivation of a community support

system for people with mental disorders who have been hospitalized for a long time and were discharged from the hospital after the earthquake because these psychiatric hospitals were closed due to earthquake damage. She reported that there were few professionals who could do crisis intervention independently, and public workers and leaders in communities who deal with mental disorders were emotionally exhausted.

She viewed as problematic the fact that psychiatric CNS are too limited in the systematical framework of the hospital, and that there are few psychiatric CNS who can work independently from the doctors.

## From the perspective of a provider of Psychological Aid

*Masahiro Nishikawa, Associate Professor, International Christian University;  
a member of the IASCP Task Force of Mutual-and-Child-Aid, Tokyo, Japan*

*Reporter: Rie Nasu, IASCP*

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We provided the psychological aid for the twenty five teachers who worked at the school that was in Yamamoto-cho and in the crisis situation caused by the earthquake and nuclear accident. The purpose of the aid was consisted to "learn the mean way to get safe space through the movement of breathing out really empty the chest," "encourage for them to express freely," "provide the dialogue skills with children." We arrived at the school and gave two hours' workshop which was the exercise of breathing out really empty the chest. And then we talked with the teachers. The teachers were making actions to-

### Reporter's Comment

I became to understand the current situation of Yamamoto-cho through Professor Nishikawa's talk. And Also his talk made me think what I could do for the harmed people from this earthquake, who had to take an action for

ward the students and the situation around them, however they seemed to be hyperactive as affect from reaction of stress. And they seemed to be isolated without realizing. Therefore, I suggested them not trying to do everything but do what they could do, and it was important to make actions accordance with the principals' opinions since it was the time of crisis. I thought it was important how we as professionals could provide the psychological aid for the people who had to be in the constantly tense situation.

the reconstruction. Being a psychotherapist who lives distance from the site and as a professional, I was convinced that it was indispensable for us to provide psychological aid for them with the third eye.

## A view from a distance in Japan - the role of press reporting

*Seisuke Nakamura, Executive Director, Fukuoka Kasuga City Culture Circle;  
Former Newspaper Journalist, Fukuoka, Japan*

*Reporter: Hisashi Yamada, IASCP*

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Mr. Nakamura presented two problems of media report on Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11th, 2011. One is the problem about the moral issue of mass media that repeated televised shocking pictures have led to secondary trauma of the audience. Mass media tends to depreciate moral because of their higher priority on getting more audience. Although nowadays there is a system such as meeting of media chief which controls excessive media report, the reality is that once media frenzy heats up, system will become frayed. On the other hand, too much consideration on moral has a danger to hide the truth, thus thoughtless restraint is not encouraged.

Second is the problem of "Yokonarabi" media report.

### Reporter's Comment

As Mr. Nakamura presented, the picture of media led secondary trauma in this earthquake disaster, but actually not so many people recognizes this fact. Media report

"Yokonarabi" means that everyone behaves in the same orderly manner, which is one of a hallmarks of Japanese culture. Mr. Nakamura explained that each media has the same attitude to broadcast only the information given from civil service, and this was one of the factors which made the truth of nuclear power plant difficult to see.

In Fukuoka where is far from the affected area, the interest of people to support affected area is dropping compared to the time just after earthquake disaster. Mr. Nakamura insisted that although mass media has a lot of problems, they have a big role they must take which is to maintain the support system and not to make the world forget this disaster by connecting affected areas and reader.

which intends to support affected area is of course important, however affected people are not only at affected area but all over Japan, and I think this must be broadly minded as a task to be addressed.

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**Publisher:** Hidefumi Kotani  
**Editors:** Toshinori Hanai, Naoko Sekido, Yoshiya Ishikawa, Kayoko Hige  
**Translation:** Chizuru Funama, James Amagasa

