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PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN TEACHERS DURING THE WAR: A MORITA THERAPY–BASED STUDY GUIDE

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Content

Introduction

How to Use This Study Guide

February 24, 2022 marked a turning point not only for Ukraine, but for the entire world. Since the beginning of the war, millions of Ukrainians have been affected through loss of life, displacement, and the disruption of daily living and education. According to international reports, a large number of children have been directly impacted by the war, with many unable to attend school or living far from their homes. Exact figures continue to change as the war remains ongoing.

Teachers and students live and learn under the same prolonged conditions of uncertainty and stress. Schools continue to function, classes continue to be held, and educational responsibilities remain, even when stable physical and psychological safety cannot be guaranteed.

In situations of prolonged crisis, psychological distress does not disappear on its own. Fear, anxiety, exhaustion, and a sense of helplessness often accumulate over time. Waiting until the end of the war to address psychological well-being would mean leaving both teachers and students without support during a critical period of their lives.

Teachers face a particularly difficult position. While experiencing the same stressors as the children they teach, they are also expected to provide structure, stability, and emotional presence in the classroom. Supporting teachers' psychological well-being is therefore an essential step in supporting children.

The purpose of this study guide

This study guide was developed in response to these realities. Its purpose is not to eliminate fear, pain, or exhaustion, nor to provide quick solutions. Instead, it offers ways of understanding common psychological experiences shared by teachers living and working under war conditions.

The guide aims to help teachers continue their daily lives and professional roles without self-blame, even when circumstances do not improve. It can be used independently and does not require prior knowledge of psychology or mental health practices.

Why a Morita Therapy–based approach?

Morita Therapy provides a psychological framework that does not require individuals to change or suppress their emotions in order to function. Instead, it recognizes that fear, anxiety, and the desire to live and work meaningfully often coexist, especially under extreme conditions.

This perspective is particularly relevant in wartime, where emotional distress is a natural response to ongoing danger and loss. Rather than aiming to remove difficult emotions, Morita Therapy offers ways to live and act alongside them. For teachers, this approach can provide a realistic and sustainable way to remain engaged in their work with students.

How this study guide was developed?

The content of this study guide is based on two surveys of Ukrainian teachers conducted in January and October 2024, as well as a series of Morita Therapy–based online support sessions with teachers from different regions of Ukraine. In particular, this guide draws on intensive work with teachers in the Zaporizhzhia region, where educators have continued teaching under conditions of ongoing military threat and prolonged uncertainty.

During these sessions, teachers shared their experiences, concerns, and questions related to living and teaching in wartime. The materials presented in this book reflect the issues that teachers themselves identified as important, the perspectives they found helpful, and the questions that emerged repeatedly during discussions.

How to use this study guide?

This study guide does not need to be read from beginning to end. Readers are encouraged to select chapters that feel most relevant to their current situation. On difficult days, it may be enough to read only a few pages—or to set the book aside and return to it later.

The guide is intended as a companion rather than a prescription. It aims to support teachers in continuing their work and daily lives under ongoing crisis conditions, while respecting individual limits and circumstances.

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Chapter 1. Morita therapy as a Practical Psychological Framework for Teachers in Wartime

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Morita Therapy: A Clinical Psychotherapeutic Approach and Its Educational Application

Morita Therapy is a psychotherapy developed in Japan in 1919 by psychiatrist Shoma Morita, originally designed for the treatment of neuroses. Over the past century, books on Morita Therapy have been published in multiple languages, including Japanese, English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean, and the approach has been introduced in regions such as North America, Europe, Australia, and China.

Within clinical and applied contexts, Morita Therapy has been utilized in situations involving severe psychological distress, including work with refugees who have experienced torture (Ishiyama et al., 2013) and with individuals affected by large-scale violence, such as in post-conflict Rwanda (Minami, 2012). These applications suggest that Morita Therapy may be particularly relevant in circumstances characterized by extreme and prolonged distress. In such contexts, where suffering cannot be resolved through external resources, Morita Therapy's emphasis on accepting reality as it is and engaging in purpose-oriented action has been reported as meaningful for individuals seeking psychological reconstruction while continuing to live under harsh conditions.

As a form of psychotherapy, Morita Therapy is grounded in long-term clinical practice in medical and mental health settings. Its theoretical framework focuses in particular on the relationship between fear of death, anxiety, and the desire for life, as well as on how psychological suffering may be maintained and intensified.

This book, however, is not a treatment manual and does not provide clinical instructions, diagnoses, or therapeutic protocols. Instead, it draws on the clinical concepts of Morita Therapy and translates them into a psychological and educational

framework that can be used to understand emotional suffering and support daily functioning in non-clinical settings, such as education.

The Origin of Psychological Distress

At the core of Morita Therapy lies the understanding that the human mind is shaped by the coexistence of two fundamental forces: the fear of death and the desire for life. In clinical terms, fear of death is closely related to existential anxiety and is often expressed through various forms of psychological distress, including generalized anxiety, panic reactions, and trauma-related symptoms.

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.

In wartime, fear of death becomes particularly salient. Concerns about personal safety, the safety of family members, students, and colleagues, and uncertainty about the future are persistent and unavoidable. Morita Therapy does not conceptualize fear of death as pathological in itself. Rather, it understands this fear as a natural and inevitable expression of the desire to live, to protect, and to maintain meaningful relationships and social roles.

From this perspective, attempts to eliminate fear of death including anxiety completely may paradoxically intensify psychological suffering. When individuals become excessively focused on controlling their internal experiences, fear can draw further attention to itself and become more persistent, forming a self-reinforcing cycle of distress.

How Psychological Distress Intensifies

Morita Therapy explains the intensification of psychological distress not as a sign of personal weakness, but as the result of identifiable psychological processes.

Distress tends to increase when attention becomes strongly fixed on unpleasant emotions, bodily sensations, or anxious thoughts associated with fear of death, and when individuals attempt to suppress or control these experiences.

At the same time, distress is often intensified when there is a rigid gap between how one believes one should feel or function and what is realistically possible under current conditions. In wartime, many teachers experience this gap acutely. Expectations shaped by peaceful circumstances—such as the belief that one must always remain calm, brave, or emotionally available—often become unattainable. Persisting in such expectations can lead to guilt, self-criticism, and emotional exhaustion, further reinforcing psychological distress.

Measures to Psychological Distress: Acceptance and Purpose-Oriented Action

In Morita Therapy, acceptance does not mean resignation, avoidance, or passivity. Acceptance refers to acknowledging psychological and emotional states as they are—including fear, anxiety, and exhaustion—without judging oneself or attempting their immediate elimination. Emotions are allowed to exist as they are, while action proceeds in accordance with reality.

Acceptance is inseparable from purpose-oriented action, a central therapeutic principle of Morita Therapy. This principle emphasizes directing one's behavior toward concrete and meaningful tasks that are necessary in the present moment, regardless of emotional state.For teachers, purpose-oriented action may involve continuing lessons, responding to students, or maintaining daily routines, even when fear and anxiety remain present. The criterion for evaluating action is not emotional comfort, but whether the action is appropriate and natural under the current circumstances. In Japanese, this orientation is expressed by the term **Arugamama**, meaning living in accordance with things "as they are."

Using Morita Therapy as a Thinking Tool

Beyond its clinical application, Morita Therapy can also be used as a conceptual tool for reflecting on difficult situations. The following questions, derived from clinical theory, may be helpful: What form of fear of death or existential anxiety is present, and what desire for life does it reflect? How might attention to internal experiences or rigid expectations be intensifying the difficulty? What emotions are you experiencing? What small, purpose-oriented action is possible under current conditions? This framework can be applied when reflecting on challenges faced by yourself, your students, and colleagues.

Clinical Use and Educational Use: An Important Distinction

It is important to distinguish clearly between the clinical use of Morita Therapy and its educational application in this study guide. Clinically, Morita Therapy is practiced by trained professionals within medical and mental health settings and requires appropriate assessment, professional training, and ethical responsibility.

This study guide does not aim to replace clinical treatment or professional psychological care. Rather, it applies the theoretical and conceptual foundations of Morita Therapy to an educational and supportive context, where teachers seek understanding, stability, and continuity in daily life under extreme conditions.

By maintaining continuity with its clinical origins while adapting its concepts for non-clinical use, this guide seeks to preserve both the credibility of Morita Therapy as a psychotherapy and its practical relevance for teachers living and working during war.

Chapter 2. What Ukrainian Teachers Are Experiencing: Findings from our surveys in 2024

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Background: Teachers and Students under Prolonged War Conditions

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainian students and teachers have been living and learning under continuous threat and instability. In early 2023, Professor Olha Nikolenko of Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University and her colleagues conducted a nationwide study on students' psychological conditions and the role of teachers in providing support during wartime. The study revealed that 68% of students identified "coping with fear" as their most pressing challenge (Nikolenko et al., 2023). Creative approaches such as art therapy were reported as effective, and everyday practices—sharing daily routines, expressing empathy, and maintaining emotional presence—were highlighted as key forms of teacher support.

These findings raise an important question: what about the mental health of those who support students—the teachers themselves?

Even before the war, Ukrainian teachers faced excessive workloads and high psychological stress (Dziuba et al., 2021). Under wartime conditions, these burdens have intensified. In response, the Ukrainian government and international organizations have introduced various forms of psychological support, including resilience training and coping programs (Tolstoukhov & Lunov, 2023), stress management seminars, counseling, and group-based interventions (Chorna, 2024). Other approaches, such as remote Psychological First Aid (Shragal & Pushkarskaya, 2025), positive psychology, self-development programs (Ignatovych, 2023), cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness, and related methods, have also been implemented.

However, many of these interventions tend to emphasize symptom reduction and positive thinking, while paying less attention to the deeper emotional struggles

teachers experience under prolonged threat. Research by Nadyukova and Frenzel (2025), involving 724 secondary school teachers, showed a strong reliance on problem-focused coping and emotional suppression. The pressure to function as a "model teacher" was associated with avoidance of negative emotions, contributing to emotional labor, burnout, and depletion of psychological resources (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Zagefka, 2022).

Against this background, alternative psychological frameworks—such as mindfulness, which encourages nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment, and Morita Therapy, a Japanese psychotherapeutic approach—have attracted growing attention.

Overview of the Two Nationwide Surveys (2024)

To better understand the psychological experiences of Ukrainian teachers under prolonged war conditions, we conducted two nationwide surveys in 2024. The aim of these surveys was not only to assess psychological distress, but also to explore how teachers continue to cope, adapt, and support students in extremely difficult circumstances.

The first survey was conducted in January 2024 and included 506 teachers from across Ukraine (Zhao, Nikolenko, Nikolenko, & Zhdanova-Nedilko, 2024).

It focused on teachers' own psychological distress, their observations of students' psychological difficulties, and the practices they found helpful in supporting students during the war. The findings revealed high levels of psychological strain among teachers, alongside continued efforts to maintain their professional roles. At the same time, many teachers demonstrated an ongoing capacity to cope and remain engaged in teaching, despite severe and persistent stress.

Building on the first survey, a second nationwide survey was conducted in October 2024 with 667 teachers (Zhao, Nikolenko, Nikolenko, & Zhdanova-Nedilko, 2025). This survey had two primary aims: To examine changes in teachers' mental health and coping over time as the war continued; To explore the applicability of Morita Therapy's theoretical mechanisms, particularly those related to pathological processes such as Morita neuroticism and avoidance.

Mental Health and Resilience across the Two Surveys

Across the two surveys, indicators of psychological distress showed a gradual worsening over time. The proportion of teachers whose K10 scores suggested possible mental illness increased from 53.4% in January to 57.3% in October, reflecting the cumulative burden of prolonged war-related stress.

In contrast, overall levels of resilience remained relatively stable (January: 80.24; October: 79.58). This pattern suggests that although psychological distress increased, many teachers continued to draw on internal and external resources to sustain daily functioning.

Applicability of Morita Therapy

Morita Therapy was introduced in both surveys as a psychological framework for understanding distress and continuing daily life under extreme conditions. In both surveys, approximately 95% of teachers reported that Morita Therapy was helpful for their mental health. In the second survey, we examined Morita Therapy's theoretical mechanisms more closely, focusing on Morita neuroticism and avoidance. These factors showed close associations with both psychological distress (K10 scores) and resilience, suggesting the theoretical applicability of Morita Therapy for understanding teachers' psychological experiences under prolonged stress (see Table 1).

Table 1 Correlations of the main variables

	Resilience	Morita Therapy`s pathological mechanism	Hope for the end of the war	Preference on internal aspects of psychological training
K10	-.32 **	.42 **	.24 **	.01
Resilience	1	-.34 **	.22 **	-.03
Morita Therapty's pathological mechanism		1	-.07	.08
Hope for the end of the war				-.03

** $p < .01$

Alongside the survey research, we have been developing a Ukrainian version of Morita Therapy together with teachers from across Ukraine, including educators in the Zaporizhzhia region. Through this collaborative process, Morita Therapy has been adapted to local educational contexts, demonstrating its practical applicability as a psychological framework for teachers living and working during war.

We will introduce more of the findings of the second survey. The following sections describe in detail teachers' psychological states, students' school life and anxieties, coping strategies used in educational settings, difficulties faced in supporting students, and teachers' views on useful psychological training.

Participants: A total of 667 teachers participated in this survey. The gender of participants was 23 male (3.4%), 638 female (93.7%), and 6 (0.9%) did not want to answer. In terms of age, 31 participants (4.6%) were in their 20s, 120 (17.6%) were in their 30s, 162 (23.8%) were in their 40s, 257 (37.8%) were in their 50s, and 97 (14.3%) were in their 60s. The majority of participants had been teaching for more than 10 years (584 participants, 87.6%). Participants were from 21 regions in eastern, central, and western Ukraine.

1. Teachers' Psychological States

Teachers were asked to evaluate their current mental state compared to when the war started in February 2022. In the second survey, 10.4% reported that their

mental state had “improved,” 42.7% reported it was “the same,” and 46.9% reported it had “worsened.” In the first survey, 29.2% reported improved mental health, 42.3% reported it was almost the same, and 28.5% reported it had deteriorated. Overall, the second survey showed more worsened data than the first survey.

This result suggests that many teachers had not been able to fully recover from the psychological shock experienced at the beginning of the war. Free-text responses indicated several reasons for deterioration, including: “Hopelessness” (24 participants), such as “I don't see a way out of the situation.”; “Unable to control emotions” (17 participants), such as “I can’t always control my emotions.”; “The constant trials of war” (7 participants), such as “Missile attacks on our town have gotten worse.”

At the same time, teachers who reported improvement since the beginning of the war (multiple responses allowed) described reasons such as: “I have learned to manage my emotions” (258 participants); “I have a concrete understanding of the situation and know what to do” (204 participants); “I have built my daily routines” (140 participants) These responses show two realities occurring at once: ongoing deterioration for many teachers due to prolonged war conditions, and gradual adaptation for others through emotional skills, clearer understanding, and rebuilding routines.

2. Students’ School Life, Students’ Anxiety and Fears, and Teachers’ Coping Strategies in Educational Settings

Teachers reported that missiles and raid sirens repeatedly interrupt students’ normal daily life, and that students must go to shelters (81.3%). This ongoing disruption means concentration is impaired and students remain under tension.

Teachers reported the following daily anxieties and fears among students (multiple choice): Uncertainty in everything (366 participants); Fear for the safety of family and friends (299 participants); Fear for their own safety (285 participants); Fear of losing their homes (141 participants). Compared to previous results, the response “uncertainty in everything” stood out.

Teachers reported techniques they taught students to cope with anxiety and fear (single choice): Tell them it is fine to be afraid (28.0%); Hold common creative projects (26.8%); Talk about their daily lives (24.9%); Talk about their anxieties and fears (14.3%); Tell them not to be afraid (6.0%). Free responses also described helpful practices, such as: “In the evening, teachers read fairy-tales to students to emotionally prepare for calm sleep.”

Overall, most teachers used methods that recognize fear as a natural emotion, discuss it openly with students, encourage attention to everyday life, and use creative activities. Fewer teachers taught students “not to be afraid” than in the previous survey. This suggests that teachers have come to better recognize the importance of “coexisting with anxiety.”

Examples of successful cases (multiple choice) included: Sharing emotions, jokes and life stories (251 participants); Joint events for small groups of students (watching movies, discussing books, going to the theatres) (168 participants); Contests of creative works (56 participants); “Jokes and life stories” was derived from the “Other” responses in the previous survey and was included as a response option for the first time in this survey. It became the most frequently selected option, representing a significant finding of this study.

In the context of extreme stress, such as during wartime, sharing humor and life stories is not merely casual conversation—it can play an important role in fostering psychological resilience and building social support networks. Humor is

widely recognized as an effective strategy for coping with stress. Martin (2007) explains that humor serves both an emotional regulation function by alleviating negative emotions, and a social function by enhancing interpersonal relationships. Sharing laughter within a group creates a sense of belonging, which can counter feelings of isolation and helplessness, particularly vital in war-affected environments (Fredrickson, 2001). In such circumstances, laughter becomes a tool for survival, helping individuals sustain hope and emotional connection.

Meanwhile, sharing life stories supports individuals in restoring a sense of self-continuity and meaning making in the face of trauma. According to McAdams (2001), narrating one's life as a coherent story deepens self-understanding and allows people to discover meaning and value even in adversity. In educational settings, when teachers share personal stories with students, it helps build psychological closeness and mutual trust (Noddings, 1992). This narrative engagement can be seen as a concrete practice of care in education.

Teachers also reported cases of teaching difficulties (multiple choice), including: Students who had suffered great losses (family, friends, home, etc.) in the war (308 participants); Students' panic attacks (254 participants); Students with a passive attitude to life (96 participants); Loss of family, friends, or home can lead to grief, trauma, and emotional withdrawal. According to Bowlby (1980), such loss disrupts attachment and affects a child's emotional and learning capacity. Panic attacks suggest extreme anxiety; when students are overwhelmed, they cannot stay within the "window of tolerance" for learning (Siegel, 1999). A passive or hopeless attitude may reflect learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). These students may lack motivation and feel there is no point in studying, especially when their basic needs are unmet.

Overall, these findings show that teachers are facing serious emotional challenges in the classroom and need more support. Trauma-informed approaches

and psychological resources are essential for both students' recovery and effective education.

3. Useful Psychological Training for Teachers

Responses to the question "What content have you found useful in the psychological trainings?" revealed a relatively balanced interest between external treatment training (48.3%) and internal treatment (51.7%). This suggests that teachers see value in both practical intervention strategies and internal psychological coping methods when supporting themselves and their students during the war.

External treatment training typically includes behavioral techniques, classroom management strategies, and crisis-response tools. Its popularity reflects the need for concrete, action-oriented methods in highly unstable environments. In crisis situations, structured external interventions can restore a sense of order and provide immediate support (Hobfoll et al., 2007).

On the other hand, the slightly higher preference for internal treatment points to recognition of emotional processing, self-awareness, and stress regulation as vital components of long-term psychological resilience. Internal approaches often include mindfulness, self-compassion, or Morita Therapy—methods that may help teachers manage their own emotional responses and model psychological flexibility for students (Neff, 2003; Hayes et al., 1999).

Overall, the nearly even split indicates that effective psychological training in conflict settings must integrate both external and internal strategies. Teachers are not only first responders but also emotional anchors for students. Thus, programs that balance classroom techniques with personal coping skills are likely to be the most impactful.

Chapter 3. Creating a Morita Therapy–Based Teacher Group: Aims and Online Methods

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Rationale and Potential Effectiveness of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group

The situation in Ukraine and the findings from our nationwide surveys clearly indicate that psychological support for teachers is essential in order to sustain their resilience and reduce psychological distress under prolonged war conditions. In our surveys, 95.5% of teachers agreed with the principles of Morita Therapy, an Eastern psychological approach that most participants had never encountered before, and believed that it could help improve their mental health and resilience.

Within psychotherapy, group learning is widely recognized as an effective format for psychological support. Group-based approaches provide hope, reassurance through the realization that one is not alone, opportunities for learning from others, and mutual support through developing interpersonal bonds (Vinogradov & Yalom, 1989). Morita Therapy itself has a long tradition of group learning, in which participants share experiences and support one another as part of the therapeutic process. In Ukraine, group-based psychological support has also played an important role in maintaining mental health during wartime. Based on these considerations, we decided to establish the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group.

Our team worked with Ukrainian teachers from various regions throughout 2024. From early 2024 to early 2025, we conducted group trainings for teachers across Ukraine and gradually developed practical methods adapted to Ukrainian realities. In March 2025, we launched a new psychological support project specifically for teachers in Zaporizhzhia. This project was proposed by one of our author, Professor Olha Nikolenko, and implemented with the official support of the Zaporizhzhia City Council. Monthly online sessions based on Morita Therapy are currently being conducted, with approximately 60 teachers participating.

Teachers in Zaporizhzhia face particularly severe conditions, including daily shelling and constant tension. Many strongly wish to control both external circumstances and their own emotions, yet find this impossible, leading to inner conflict and psychological strain. At the same time, these teachers demonstrate remarkable openness to new knowledge and strong motivation to continue developing as educators, even under extreme conditions.

Tasks of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group

The main task of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group is to help teachers adapt psychologically to the current wartime environment and the future post-war context, while maintaining their ability to teach and support students.

This overall aim can be divided into three interconnected tasks: To help teachers cope with negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and inner pain; To help teachers enhance confidence, foster positive emotional experiences, and find ways to restore psychological and physical energy; To help teachers better support students through the above processes; Teachers from eastern, central, western, and southern regions of Ukraine, as well as those currently living abroad, were invited to participate. Each region faces distinct challenges, and the group content was designed to be relevant and supportive for teachers across diverse contexts.

Methods of Online Group Work

Group therapy is strongly influenced by the place in which members meet and the atmosphere created within that space. For this reason, online group therapy is often considered challenging. However, under current conditions in Ukraine, online formats are often the only feasible option, as education and many forms of psychological support are already conducted remotely.

Ukrainian teachers generally demonstrate an open and proactive attitude toward learning, which further supported the feasibility of online group work. As a result, we concluded that an online Morita Therapy–based group could be effective.

The group trainings were conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation into Ukrainian. Although interpretation slightly slowed communication, it did not reduce effectiveness. All presentation materials were provided in Ukrainian to support comprehension.

A central feature of the group was not only discussion, but also the sharing of teachers' lived experiences. Each teacher brought unique experiences shaped by war conditions, and participants consistently reported that exchanging practical strategies and emotional insights was highly valuable.

The group sessions followed a flexible structure that included the following elements:

1) Preparation before sessions

Teachers' questions were collected in advance, and session content was designed to address real-life challenges relevant to the current Ukrainian context.

2) Beginning of sessions

Sessions began with simple body-based relaxation practices. Physical awareness was used to support mind–body integration and enhance a sense of stability.

3) Lecture component

While grounded in Morita Therapy, additional psychological concepts relevant to teachers' needs—such as self-compassion and ambiguous loss—were also introduced. Each session included brief review of previous content.

4) Practice component

Practical exercises were conducted collectively, fostering a sense of connection and shared presence despite the online format.

5) Discussion component

Teachers discussed how to address real-life problems in educational and personal contexts, linking psychological concepts to everyday action.

6) Reflection, documentation, and feedback loop

The content of group discussions was carefully recorded and qualitatively analyzed. Insights and recurring themes were then used to refine the focus and structure of subsequent sessions, allowing the program to remain responsive to teachers' evolving needs.

Chapter 4. Emotional Difficulties Faced by Ukrainian Teachers: Working with Emotions

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Based on our nationwide surveys and group trainings, we identified several difficulties commonly faced by Ukrainian teachers living and working under war conditions. From the perspective of Morita Therapy, these difficulties can also be understood as expectations—that is, wishes or hopes that arise from the desire to live better under extremely difficult circumstances.

At the individual level, teachers face the following difficulties:

Fear of dying and persistent anxiety, for oneself, loved ones, and frontline soldiers, accompanied by unstable mental states and a lack of positive emotions.

→ Expectation: a wish to control fear and anxiety and to increase positive emotions.

Accumulation of fatigue and depletion of internal energy, caused not only by emotional exhaustion but also by limited rest and multiple roles (teacher, parent, supporter, counselor).

→ Expectation: a wish to restore internal energy.

Difficulty finding meaning in life and work under prolonged uncertainty and loss.

→ Expectation: a wish to rediscover meaning and purpose.

At the environmental level, teachers face additional challenges:

Impoverishment of the physical environment, including shortages of water, gas, electricity, shelter living, and constant sirens.

→ Expectation: a wish to maintain mental health in such conditions.

Impoverishment of the mental environment, characterized by reduced constructive communication and experiences of moral degradation, leading to feelings of isolation.

→ Expectation: a wish to connect hearts and minds and to protect one's energy from disappointment and despair.

Our group work was designed with these difficulties and expectations in mind. Rather than applying Morita Therapy unchanged, we have been developing a "Ukrainian Morita Therapy"—a creative adaptation suited to the realities of a new form of hybrid war. We hope that teachers can gradually become practitioners of this approach in their own lives, strengthening themselves and supporting those around them.

Morita Therapy and Emotions

Morita Therapy places particular importance on working with emotions. Many psychological problems arise when people believe that certain emotions or bodily sensations are abnormal and must be eliminated. This leads to constant struggle with one's inner experience.

Morita Therapy offers a different perspective: emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness, or tension do not need to be eliminated. By recognizing emotions as natural, we reduce the need to fight against them and become less entangled in them.

From the perspective of Morita Therapy, emotions have several important characteristics:

First, emotions are a natural human phenomenon and cannot be controlled by willpower. Feelings such as anxiety, nervousness, or sadness arise spontaneously and do not disappear simply because we want them to.

Second, emotions cannot be selectively avoided. It is not possible to eliminate unpleasant emotions such as fear or shame while keeping only pleasant emotions.

Attempting to do so often increases suffering.

Third, emotions do not need to be judged as good or bad. Just as we are not responsible for the weather, we are not responsible for the emotions that arise within us. Self-blame only adds additional suffering.

Emotions are not static. They change through natural processes:When emotions are allowed to exist without interference, they tend to rise and fall gradually and eventually subside on their own. Repeated exposure to similar emotional experiences often leads to habituation; what was once overwhelming may become more tolerable over time.When attention becomes strongly focused on emotions or bodily sensations, they tend to intensify. New experiences and repeated actions can gradually cultivate new emotional responses, even when fear or anxiety is present. These processes suggest that emotions do not require direct control in order to change.

The Relationship between Emotions and Actions

A central principle of Morita Therapy is the distinction between emotions and actions. Emotions cannot be controlled by willpower, but actions can be chosen. Even when fear or anxiety is present, people are often able to act—for example, to speak, to teach, or to complete necessary tasks.

When actions are taken despite unpleasant emotions, the emotions themselves often fade naturally, while the fact of action and its outcome remain. However, actions should not be used as a tool to eliminate emotions. When action is taken with the goal of “making fear disappear,” this often leads to disappointment and renewed struggle.

In Morita Therapy, actions are taken because they are necessary and appropriate, not because they promise emotional relief.

Ukrainian Ways of Dealing with Emotions: Practical Suggestions

Based on our work with teachers, we offer the following suggestions adapted to the Ukrainian context: When fear or anxiety arises, recognize it as natural and allow time for it to pass. If emotions are overwhelming or exhaustion is severe, temporarily "freezing" the emotional struggle may be helpful.

Teachers do not need to hide fear or anxiety completely. Expressing emotions in a moderate and authentic way—being "as one is" (arugamama)—can foster empathy and meaningful communication with students.

Continue to do what is possible despite fear and anxiety, such as teaching, preparing lessons, or maintaining daily routines. When acting, it is important not to think, "This will make my anxiety disappear," but simply to focus on the task itself.

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

From the group discussions, several important patterns became clear.

First, teachers are living under extremely severe conditions. Daily shelling and air-raid sirens mean that they cannot fully relax even for a short time. Many remain in a constant state of tension and anxiety, with no psychological "off time."

Second, many teachers expressed a strong desire to control both the situation and their own emotions. At the same time, they clearly recognized that such control is impossible under current conditions. This gap between wanting to control and being unable to do so creates a deep inner conflict, which itself becomes a major source of psychological suffering.

Third, teachers repeatedly asked for concrete techniques to improve mental health and emotional stability. It seems important to explain that psychological support includes both external approaches (behavior, routines, physical activity, communication) and internal approaches (acceptance, self-compassion, and attitude change). Teachers appeared to intuitively sense that combining these two is necessary.

Finally, teachers showed a strong openness to learning. They clearly feel a lack of psychological knowledge and practical tools for restoring mental health, and

they expressed a strong motivation to acquire such knowledge.

Teachers' Voices from Group Discussions

Teacher A emphasized that all emotions are normal, including negative ones. She stated that teachers should accept their own emotions and help children accept theirs as well. At the same time, she expressed anxiety about teachers' mental health, saying that without proper care, teachers may eventually need psychiatric treatment. She raised the issue of emotional control repeatedly, asking how emotions can actually be managed in practice. She admitted openly that teachers do not yet know how to do this and need help.

Teacher B focused on existential themes. She stated that teachers need to explain to children both the joy of life and the fear of death. She emphasized the importance of controlling the situation, but also acknowledged that this is often impossible. Therefore, she suggested that teachers must learn to go beyond excessive focus on their own fear and health, and instead learn how to shift attention to other tasks and roles. She raised an important question: whether it is necessary to divert children's attention away from war-related topics, and if so, how this should be done appropriately.

Teacher C described psychological training itself as something new and valuable. She emphasized that teachers must begin by helping themselves if they want to help children. She stated that self-control and self-regulation are prerequisites for supporting students. She also noted that this knowledge should be used not only at school, but also within the family, which is also suffering during the war. She expressed the view that teachers do not need to save the whole world. Instead, they must first save themselves, and only then can they support their children. She emphasized that war is an unprecedented experience and that survival must be psychological as well as physical.

Teacher D stated that teachers have very little knowledge about how to resist the psychological impact of war and how to protect themselves, but they are open to

learning and clearly need help. She described strong emotional burnout and exhaustion, along with an inability to control emotions. Despite this, teachers continue trying to support children, provide positive emotions, and maintain a constructive attitude toward the world. She noted that physical exercise, creative activities, nature, collegial support, and art play an important role in maintaining mental health. However, she also raised a serious concern about quiet, withdrawn children—those who do not speak, hide their faces on screen, and do not express their condition. She stated that teachers do not know how to approach such children and suspect apathy or depression. She explicitly requested concrete techniques for improving both teachers' and students' mental and emotional states.

Across all discussions, teachers expressed a strong sense of responsibility toward students while simultaneously experiencing severe exhaustion and inner conflict. A shared theme was the recognition that emotions cannot be fully controlled, alongside a desire to learn how to live and act meaningfully despite fear, anxiety, and fatigue.

These voices strongly indicate the need for a psychological framework—such as Morita Therapy—that does not demand emotional calmness, but instead supports purposeful action and continuity of life even when emotions remain difficult.

Chapter 5. Inner Pain, Fear, and Hatred During the War

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Through teachers` questions, we received valuable information about their problems. Overall, these can be organized into three closely related categories:

1. Inner pain

Teachers described deep inner pain caused by losses such as the death of loved ones, the loss of a beloved home, or the loss of their previous way of life. These losses often become lasting wounds and are frequently accompanied by loneliness.

2. Fear

Teachers reported fear for their own lives, fear for their future, and fear for their children's futures. This fear is not limited to the present moment but extends into uncertainty about what lies ahead.

3. Hatred

Some teachers raised questions about whether and how one can live with hatred—toward aggressors, injustice, or those responsible for suffering.

These three experiences—inner pain, fear, and hatred—are deeply interconnected. They can be understood as arising from a shared external condition: ambiguous loss.

What Is Ambiguous Loss?

The concept of ambiguous loss refers to "a loss that remains unclear and is neither resolved nor terminated" (Boss, 1999; 2005). Unlike clear losses, ambiguous loss does not allow for closure, making it particularly difficult to cope with.

There are two main types of ambiguous loss:

Type 1: Psychologically present but physically absent

Examples include a missing family member, or a hometown that has become a combat zone, forcing relocation. It is unclear whether reunion or return will ever be possible.

Type 2: Physically present but psychologically absent

Examples include family members affected by severe illness or addiction, or returning to one's hometown or home only to find it fundamentally changed. The place or relationship still exists, but no longer feels psychologically accessible or familiar.

In both types, there is no clear farewell. The uncertainty itself is what makes ambiguous loss especially painful and persistent. The situation many teachers are facing today closely resembles this condition.

Self-Reflective Work

Take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

What is the most painful ambiguous loss you are experiencing at the moment?

Which type does it most closely resemble (Type 1 or Type 2)?

How have you been coping with this loss so far?

Why Ambiguous Loss Causes Ongoing Distress

Ambiguous loss often leads to continuing psychological distress, including inner pain, fear, loneliness, anxiety, guilt, helplessness, and sometimes self-destructive behavior. People may begin to devalue themselves, believing they are failing as parents, teachers, or individuals, and may feel unable to initiate new actions.

One reason ambiguous loss is so distressing is the presence of strong "should-be" beliefs, such as a belief in a just and logical world, or the expectation that one must always cope courageously and competently. When people face insoluble problems like ambiguous loss, these beliefs can intensify stress and self-blame.

Living with Ambiguity: Core Principles

Because ambiguous loss cannot be fully resolved, Morita Therapy and ambiguous loss theory emphasize a different approach: living with ambiguity.

This involves adopting “both A and B thinking”, rather than choosing between one option or the other. Binary thinking (A or B) often increases distress, while recognizing that both can coexist (A and B) can reduce inner tension.

For example:

Continuing to love someone who is lost and building new relationships or enjoying life

Holding grief and engaging in meaningful daily activities

Living with ambiguity in this way can strengthen resilience at the individual, family, and community levels. Communities function as a kind of psychological family, providing shared meaning and support.

Guidelines for Dealing with Ambiguous Loss

Based on the work of Boss (2012) and Kurokawa et al. (2019), the following guidelines may be helpful:

1) Name the situation

Identify the experience as ambiguous loss, using both A and B thinking. This helps externalize the problem and reduce self-blame and blame of others.

2) Separate what can and cannot be controlled

Acknowledge that war-related loss is unfair and uncontrollable. Letting go of the belief that everything should be just can reduce guilt and shame.

3) Reconstruct identity

Gradually release rigid images of the past self and build a more flexible sense of identity suited to current conditions.

4) Accept ambivalent feelings

Conflicting emotions—such as love and anger, attachment and resentment—often coexist. Recognizing and accepting these feelings reduces inner conflict.

5) Find new attachments

Forming new relationships or communities does not mean betraying those who were lost. What was lost can remain in one’s heart, while new connections are

also formed.

The Role of Pain

Inner pain is often seen as something that must be eliminated. However, attempts to eliminate pain may intensify distress. In situations of ambiguous loss, pain can sometimes serve a constructive role, marking a turning point that makes change possible. When endurance reaches its limit, people may begin to reorganize their lives in new ways.

Living with Hatred

Hatred can sometimes serve a protective function, helping people recognize injustice and unite against harm. From an evolutionary perspective, hatred and fear have supported survival. However, prolonged hatred can weigh heavily on the mind, diminish peace, and make trust and joy difficult.

Distinguishing between friends and foes without being consumed by hatred is extremely challenging. Rather than attempting to eliminate hatred, it may be more realistic to acknowledge it as natural, while choosing not to become absorbed in it. When hatred becomes overwhelming, stepping away from situations that intensify it can help protect psychological well-being.

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

When one of the authors joined one of the discussion groups, she saw that the participants were hesitant to start talking about their losses and feelings of loss during the war. So, after a long silence, the author took the initiative and began to talk about her own losses, experiences, psychological family, and coping strategies. The participants expressed their sympathy and began to share their experiences of physical and psychological loss.

Regarding support within the team, two participants noted that such topics are

not usually brought up in conversation. Most often, colleagues formally express words of support and sympathy and provide material assistance, but at the same time, the person remains alone with their pain and difficult experiences. Therefore, even just crying in the company of people who have also experienced certain losses is a great relief.

Another participant noted that she had experienced difficult physical losses and was suffering greatly because of this, as four close people had passed away. She noted that prayer and going to church provide her with psychological support, and she is also considering seeing a psychologist, because many of her colleagues communicate with psychologists, receive counseling, undergo therapy, and note its effectiveness.

The next participant noted that she is experiencing psychological loss, extreme pain, and very often suffers from uncertainty because her son has been in captivity for three years. She finds a way out and help in helping others—through work and volunteering. It is her work that helps her keep herself in shape. She realizes that she is important and needed by her students. She understands her mission as a teacher through support and compassion, not just her educational function as a teacher.

The next participant noted that she was experiencing psychological difficulties related to her husband. Her husband is a veteran. He returned from the war and, fortunately, did not suffer any significant physical injuries or wounds, but he was severely traumatized psychologically and continues to suffer. He often tells his wife that he needs to be alone, in peace. This is especially evident when he receives news that one of his comrades has been seriously wounded or killed. After that, her husband tries to isolate himself, his mood drops, and he becomes depressed. His wife notes that she finds the strength to stabilize him, charge him with positivity, and tries to involve him in joint activities. He also tries to respond and be a support for her. In this way, the couple supports each other.

During reflection on their own losses, there were many thoughts, tears, and a

mostly depressed mood. However, after analyzing their condition, the participants said that they noticed that when we express our emotions, reveal such complex topics, and open up, it becomes easier for us because taboo topics that we had kept inside for a long time and did not express are released. Such difficult emotions are very hard to bear, but when there is a space where it is possible to talk about one's complex experiences, it feels like a relief to share one's pain.

One of the participants noted that the meeting was both difficult and moving. She said, “We were silent a lot, cried, thought, and seemed to experience what we heard from others. It was striking that when one of the participants spoke about the pain her students had experienced, it seemed as if she herself was going through it.”

The participants noted that since the beginning of the war, their circle of communication has narrowed significantly to their closest relatives and friends. The participants also note that even with loved ones, relatives, and friends, it is difficult to talk about losses, deep psychological trauma, and wounds. On the one hand, this is to avoid showing their own weakness, and on the other hand, to protect others from being traumatized by their complex experiences and feelings.

In the words of one participant: “Most of our teachers are caring and sensitive people, and we really want them to find as much support and comfort as possible, which the participants found during these training sessions.”

The participants thanked for the sensitivity, sincerity, and openness of these meetings. They said that it is precisely the opportunity to talk about such complex and painful topics that allows for the creation of a space for free communication. In this space, an atmosphere of support is created, which happens because people share their pain with each other. Such meetings give hope through the exchange of experiences of living through difficult losses, as if the strength of our community is nourished by the fact that each participant finds their own ways of comfort and opportunities to cope with their difficult experiences, and when there is the ability and strength to share their findings, it increases the resilience of everyone present at such meetings.

Chapter 6. Working with Fear and Anxiety

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Fear and anxiety are closely related but distinct emotional experiences. Fear arises when an immediate and overwhelming personal danger is clearly perceived. Anxiety arises when one faces an uncertain threat to one's safety, value, or meaning of existence (Lazarus, 1991). Both belong to the human threat system.

Human emotional functioning can be understood as consisting of three interacting systems:

Acquisition system: pleasure, achievement, excitement, enjoyment

Security system: safety, fulfillment, emotional connection with others

Threat system: fear, anxiety, anger, hatred, self-blame

These systems exist in dynamic balance. When one system becomes dominant, the others tend to diminish. During wartime, fear and anxiety intensify, causing the threat system to expand while the acquisition and security systems shrink. As a result, people may feel that joy, meaning, and emotional connection disappear from daily life.

Persistent activation of the threat system is associated with various mental health conditions, including specific phobia, social phobia, panic disorder, agoraphobia, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive–compulsive disorder, acute stress disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Coping with Fear and Anxiety (from the Perspective of Morita Therapy)

1. Accept fear and anxiety as part of your experience, without trying to eliminate them.

Morita Therapy does not regard fear and anxiety as pathological states that must be removed. They are natural reactions to threat and uncertainty, and expressions of the desire for life.

In clinical Morita Therapy, including psychological support for people facing life-threatening illness, a core message is: “It is acceptable to fear death. Live constructively today, as things are.”

Attempts to eliminate fear and anxiety often intensify suffering. Avoidance, suppression, or constant monitoring of internal states can create a vicious cycle in which fear grows stronger through resistance. In contrast, when fear and anxiety are accepted or at least acknowledged, without attempts at control or eradication, they tend to change naturally over time. Emotional states are fluid; when they are not forcibly managed, they often lose intensity.

Accepting fear and anxiety does not mean resignation or passivity. It means allowing them to exist while continuing to live and act.

2. Find the desire for life behind fear and anxiety

Teachers living and working during war are repeatedly exposed to bombings, alarms, loss, and uncertainty. Such conditions exhaust psychological energy and may obscure awareness of one’s desire for life.

From the perspective of Morita Therapy, fear and anxiety always reflect what matters deeply. Behind fear lie desires for safety, love, connection, achievement, enjoyment, and meaning—elements belonging to the acquisition and security systems.

When fear dominates attention, these desires may become invisible. By gently asking what fear is protecting or pointing toward, individuals may reconnect with their desire for life, even when fear itself remains present.

3. Act constructively to demonstrate the desire for life

While emotions cannot be directly controlled, actions can be chosen.

Morita Therapy emphasizes purpose-oriented action: focusing on what can be done here and now, rather than on what cannot be changed. Even in unpleasant reality and in the presence of fear and anxiety, constructive action remains possible.

Examples include caring for children or animals, teaching, communicating with family, engaging in creative activities, gardening, volunteering, or maintaining daily routines. Many teachers have reported finding renewed meaning and energy by continuing small, necessary actions, even while fear persisted.

Action should not be used as a technique to eliminate fear. Action is taken together with fear, not to remove it, as an expression of the desire to live.

4. Using Your Temperament as a Strength

Morita Therapy does not divide personality traits into good or bad. Traits such as nervousness, sensitivity, anxiety proneness, or perfectionism often reflect serious engagement with life.

Individuals with anxious or sensitive temperaments may be more attentive, careful, empathetic, and responsible. These qualities can be valuable in teaching and caregiving roles. Rather than attempting to change one's temperament, Morita Therapy encourages using it constructively, in ways that align with reality and purpose.

Dealing with Psychosomatic Symptoms

Fear and anxiety may manifest physically, producing psychosomatic symptoms such as palpitations, dizziness, gastrointestinal discomfort, fatigue, or hair loss.

From a Morita Therapy perspective, the following principles are important:

1. Medical evaluation first. Physical symptoms should be assessed by medical professionals when necessary.
2. Breaking the two vicious cycles. 1) Attention–sensation cycle: Excessive attention to bodily sensations amplifies discomfort. Redirecting attention toward necessary action reduces symptom intensity. 2) "Should-be" thinking: Rigid expectations ("I must not feel fear," "I must function

perfectly") increase tension. A fact-oriented, flexible attitude reduces psychological strain.

3. Working with the body. Adequate rest, physical movement, and ordinary activities such as cooking, cleaning, walking, or gardening support recovery.
4. Waiting. After adjusting life and actions, allow time for natural processes to unfold. Emotional and physical states often change gradually.

Through these steps, energy is redirected from fighting fear and symptoms toward realizing one's desire for life. Morita Therapy trusts the natural healing capacity of the human mind and body.

Living in the Present

Morita Therapy encourages living in the here and now, accepting fear and anxiety as part of reality while continuing meaningful action. Especially in times of war, this approach supports psychological survival, resilience, and the continuation of life with dignity.

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

The group discussions revealed the complex psychological reality faced by Ukrainian teachers living and working under prolonged wartime conditions. Teachers' voices expressed profound fear, inner pain, exhaustion, and uncertainty, while also revealing diverse ways of continuing life and educational practice. These discussions illustrate how fear, anxiety, despair, and resilience coexist rather than replace one another.

Existential Exhaustion and the Loss of Desire for Life

Some teachers expressed a deep loss of desire for life itself. Teacher A wrote several messages in the chat that conveyed despair and emotional paralysis. When

invited to speak on behalf of the group, she declined, likely because her inner pain made verbal expression impossible. Her messages included: “I am no longer afraid of death. But I have no desire to live in this terrible world. What can I do when I don’t want anything?” “Medication does not help. We do not feel the joy and happiness of life. There is only one desire: for the war to end.” “We pray that things will not get worse. We wait and hope for victory, for the end of the war. But much does not depend on us. We have no influence on the process.” These statements reflect existential exhaustion and helplessness, characteristic of prolonged exposure to uncontrollable threat and ambiguous loss. In Morita Therapy terms, this state reflects a collapse of visible desire for life under continuous dominance of the threat system.

Fear Embedded in Daily Educational Practice

Fear was described not as a temporary emotional state, but as an everyday reality shaping teaching environments. Before one session, Teacher B shared her experience of teaching during air raids: “It is very difficult to teach in a shelter when I have only five children with me and the rest are behind a screen. They do not show their faces and do not want to talk. The children have become silent, afraid to communicate, and unwilling to learn.”

This account illustrates how students’ fear, withdrawal, and silence directly increase teachers’ emotional burden and complicate educational practice.

Teacher D stated: “I live in the Komunarsky district of Zaporizhzhia. Rockets are constantly flying over us. It’s very scary. What do I do to not be afraid?” “During the day we still live, but at night we freeze and pray to survive.” “Art and my own creativity help a lot, especially doing something with my hands.” These comments depict a life divided between functional daytime activity and nighttime fear, highlighting the limits of emotional control.

Similarly, Teacher H noted: “While we are working, we do not feel fear, but at night the fear returns. The support of colleagues plays a very important role.” This suggests that action and social connection can temporarily absorb attention, though fear itself does not disappear.

Reflecting on Fear Rather Than Immersing in It

Teacher C articulated a critical insight into the psychological struggle with fear: “It is very difficult for us to accept fear; we live with it every day. Therefore, we do not need to immerse ourselves in fear, because we are immersed in it every day.” “Fear destroys everything inside a person—feelings, desires, emotions. Nothing remains but fear.” “It is important for us to find the desire to live with fear and anxiety. How can we do that?” This question directly resonates with the central concern of Morita Therapy: how to live meaningfully when fear is unavoidable.

Constructive Coexistence with Fear

Other teachers described ways of living with fear without denying it. Teacher E emphasized purpose and responsibility toward children: “Positive thinking helps a lot. We try to find the positive even in a terrible world.” “We strive to give children light, positivity, and an idea of goodness.”Rather than naïve optimism, this reflects an active commitment to meaning and responsibility—what Morita Therapy describes as purpose-oriented action.

Teacher F described a more integrative coping approach: “Prayer, positive thinking, accepting fear and anxiety, love of life, and looking for opportunities to do something better help me a lot.” “Nature, simple natural phenomena such as the sun, rain, and green trees, as well as family, work, sports, and creativity are very calming for us.” These statements illustrate acceptance of fear alongside concrete daily

practices that restore psychological balance. Fear remains present, but life continues through action and connection.

Resource Depletion and Structural Limits

Not all teachers felt able to sustain such coping. Teacher G expressed severe depletion: “We are running out of internal resources.” “We work hard for our children, but it is very difficult to maintain inner balance and inner peace.” “Some colleagues have left, but we stay because we have nowhere else to go and no means to restore our health.”

Teacher I highlighted economic constraints and an important relational shift: “Teachers’ salaries are very low. We cannot live on this money and restore our health.” “I used to think only about children, but now I also think about my colleagues.” “Responsibility and reliability have become important values. This is a new quality of the teaching team.” These voices remind us that resilience is shaped not only by individual attitudes, but also by social, economic, and institutional conditions.

Implications for Psychological Support

At the end of the discussion, many teachers requested to be taught specific exercises and practical techniques for restoring mental health. This request reflects both exhaustion and ongoing motivation: despite fear, pain, and uncertainty, teachers continue to seek ways to live, work, and support others.

Overall, the discussion suggests that psychological support during war should not aim to eliminate fear. Rather, it should help teachers acknowledge fear, reconnect with their desire for life, and continue purposeful action within harsh realities. Morita Therapy offers a framework that closely aligns with these lived

experiences—not by imposing external solutions, but by articulating and supporting capacities that are already present among teachers.

Chapter 7. Social Support and Self-Compassion: Understanding and Fulfilling Your Inner Needs

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One of this chapter's main themes is: "How to fulfil your real needs: the inner self and self-compassion." This theme connects deeply to what many teachers shared in our sessions. It is also a foundation for caring for students and colleagues—and a major source of inner strength.

Many teachers experience inner conflicts such as: "I feel I should do this, but deep down I don't believe in it," or "I did what was expected, yet I still feel anxious, frustrated, or empty." When such conflicts remain unrecognized, they quietly consume energy and contribute to emotional exhaustion. When we learn to notice these conflicts and understand our real needs, emotional strain often decreases. As a result, energy gradually returns, and we regain the strength to engage in positive, life-supporting activities—such as connecting with nature, doing something creative, moving our bodies, or caring for ourselves. In this way, the desire for life becomes clearer again.

This chapter has two parts. First, we discuss social support, because inner strength is not built alone. Second, we introduce inner self and self-compassion as practical ways to reconnect with real needs and reduce inner conflict.

1. Social Support

Social support refers to the perception or experience that one is cared for, valued, and connected to a supportive social network. It commonly includes:

Emotional support (empathy, listening, encouragement)

Instrumental support (practical help, resources, assistance)

Informational support (advice, guidance, sharing knowledge)

Social support can buffer the psychological impact of stress and promote resilience. Cohen and Wills (1985) proposed the buffering hypothesis, suggesting

that supportive relationships reduce the negative effects of stress—especially during crises.

Example of Social Support in Japanese Schools

In Japanese school culture, support among teachers is often structured and regular. Two examples include:

1) Lesson Study Meetings

Teachers meet to observe lessons and discuss teaching practices. Junior teachers receive guidance from senior colleagues. This system fosters collaboration, shared learning, and a sense of "we are working together."

2) Student Guidance Meetings

Teachers meet to discuss students' academic, behavioral, or emotional issues. These meetings can also become a safe space for teachers to share their own concerns and experiences, strengthening empathy and trust within the staff community.

These examples suggest that social support becomes stronger when it is not accidental, but regular, structured, and culturally accepted.

2. How to Fulfil Your Real Needs: Inner Self and Self-Compassion

In one session, we received a question: "I realize there is a purpose behind every action I take—to satisfy a certain need. If I feel nervous, it means something is wrong with my actions. Are there any techniques that help you identify and define these needs so that you can manage your emotions in the future?"

We understood this question as reflecting two common difficulties: Actions do not satisfy real needs, even when a person is "doing the right thing." Real needs are not clearly recognized, especially under chronic stress.

Many teachers have had similar experiences: we act as we "should" act, but still feel anxious, frustrated, or sad. One major reason is that the action may not match our real needs—and we may not even be aware of what those needs are.

Therefore, two key questions arise:

1) How can we recognize our real needs?

2) How can we fulfil them in ways that protect and restore us?

These questions relate closely to two psychological concepts: the inner self and self-compassion.

3. Inner Self vs. Outer Self: Why Inner Conflict Happens

Inner Self

The inner self includes your thoughts, memories, emotions, values, and deeper motivations—the private part of yourself that you do not always share with others. Being aware of the inner self and what it needs is important for mental, physical, and spiritual health.

Outer Self

The outer self is what you present to the world—your appearance, behavior, roles, and social identity. The outer self helps you function in demanding environments such as school, work, and family life. In a crisis, the outer self often becomes even stronger because it is needed for survival and responsibility.

Internal Conflict

Sometimes the inner and outer selves do not align. You may believe one thing internally but behave differently externally. The greater the gap between what the inner self needs and what the outer self does, the more discomfort and stress increase—often leading to exhaustion, sadness, irritability, or emotional numbness.

4. Three Types of Internal Conflict

1) Moral Conflict

This arises when personal ethics and values are tested. For example, a teacher values honesty, but feels compelled to hide frightening information from students to protect them emotionally. Moral conflict emerges when one feels pulled between two opposing "right choices."

2) Self-Image Conflict

A teacher may be seen as generous, flexible, and always calm (outer self), while the inner self is sensitive, straightforward, and easily hurt. When asked to do something unwanted—or when treated unfairly—the teacher may not know whether to tolerate it, refuse it, or express anger.

3) Other Conflicts: Religious, Political, Interpersonal, and Family Conflicts.

Religious conflict: wanting to believe that life has meaning and justice, while also feeling anger toward God or doubt when witnessing repeated loss.

Political conflict: feeling strong hatred toward the aggressor and a desire for justice, while also feeling guilt about hatred or exhaustion from constant outrage.

Interpersonal conflict: wanting to be supportive and calm for colleagues or family, while internally feeling overwhelmed and wanting distance.

Love/family conflict: wanting to protect children emotionally, but also needing to express one's own fear and pain; wanting closeness with a partner, but needing solitude to survive stress.

These conflicts are normal under war conditions, and recognizing them often reduces self-blame.

5. How to Recognize the Inner Self and Deal with Conflicts

1) Acknowledge the conflict and ask what you really want

When you feel "not good" after doing something, it may indicate inner conflict. Try to allow both-and thinking: "Part of me wants A, and part of me needs B."

This is difficult, but psychological maturity involves tolerating complexity rather than forcing a simple answer.

Ways to listen to the inner self include:

What choice would make you feel truly satisfied?

What did you value when you were a child?

What would you choose if you were not afraid of others' opinions or future uncertainty?

2) Calm down

Calming down is not escaping from the problem. It is creating inner space so that you can see clearly and choose wisely. Helpful activities include breathing exercises, music, reading, cooking, meditation, prayer, walking, or observing nature. At work, stepping outside for fresh air and breathing deeply can also help.

3) Do not rush to solutions

Try to understand the problem first, then act with resolve. Deep understanding often requires honesty with oneself—accepting what is true, not only what is comforting.

6. Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is a key method for caring for the inner self and reducing the damage caused by internal conflict.

Three Elements of Self-Compassion (Neff)

1) Kindness to self

Do you treat yourself with the same warmth you would offer to a close friend when something goes wrong?

2) Common humanity

All humans are imperfect and make mistakes. In Morita Therapy, this

resembles an “equality view”: recognizing that suffering is part of being human.

3) Mindfulness

Noticing thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations in the present moment without resisting or avoiding them.

7. Facing Hard Feelings: “Just a Little”

When emotions are overwhelming, self-compassion does not require full acceptance immediately. A helpful principle is: “just a little.”

Germer (2009) describes a gradual process:

Resisting: “Go away from me!”

Exploring: “What am I feeling?”

Tolerating: “I don’t like it, but I can tolerate it.”

Allowing: “I can make space for this emotion.”

Befriending: “What can I learn from this?”

This process can take time. In Morita Therapy terms, waiting is essential.

Practical Steps for Working with Hard Feelings

1) Label the emotion: “This is anger,” “Fear is coming,” “This is sadness.”
2) Notice it in the body: “My stomach is tense,” “My chest feels heavy.”
3) Soften, soothe, and allow: gently relax the body, offer kind inner words, and allow the feeling to exist without fighting it.

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

When there was a pause during the division of teachers into small groups, the author shared observations about social support in European schools, particularly in Denmark and Sweden. This input was offered not as a model to be copied, but as a contrasting perspective to stimulate reflection. In schools in Denmark and Sweden, communication spaces are intentionally designed to be open. There are almost no

closed doors; when doors exist, they are often transparent, symbolizing openness and mutual visibility. This physical openness reflects a deeper cultural emphasis on dialogue, trust, and democratic participation.

In European schools and universities, important issues are discussed openly and repeatedly. Projects and plans are not only discussed after decisions are made, but also beforehand. A common phrase among teachers is: “Let’s talk about what we are going to talk about.” This practice ensures that all participants feel involved and prepared. For comfortable communication, schools provide many cozy spaces with tea, coffee, cups, and snacks. In addition to daily communication during work, regular social meetings are scheduled. Schools, universities, and even apartment buildings often organize gatherings once every two weeks or once a month. These practices are based on a shared concern that people are gradually losing connection with one another. Communication is considered a core element of social support. Teachers encourage students to ask questions and participate actively in decision-making. Students are given autonomy and choice—both in learning content and in how they achieve educational goals. As a result, students grow up more relaxed, confident in expressing their opinions, and respectful of others. According to European educators, open communication is essential for building a democratic society.

At first, many teachers reacted with visible sadness and inner pain. They expressed grief over the fact that they do not live in a peaceful country where such open communication can be safely and easily maintained. However, after reflection, teachers began to notice that they, too, have created open spaces for communication, particularly in shelters. Teachers said that whenever it is possible to meet children in shelters, it feels like a blessing. During distance learning, many children refuse to show their faces or communicate, but in shelters, teachers intentionally create small communication spaces where students can talk, interact, and feel connected.

Group Work Reflections: Communication with Students

Teachers noted that the war has caused severe isolation among children. Many have become withdrawn, avoid communication, and do not engage during online lessons. However, when blended learning became possible, communication improved significantly. Seeing each other face-to-face allowed students to rebuild relationships, discuss shared problems, and restore contact with teachers.

Teacher B shared: “Now it is difficult to communicate because even the road to the shelter can be dangerous. But the shelter is the only opportunity for communication. That is why we go there, despite the danger.”

Teacher C, director of the “Alternative” Lyceum, described organizational changes: “Our lyceum has changed the way we communicate. Teachers, parents, and students—including the student parliament—meet regularly. Meetings take place in shelters and outdoors.” She explained that their school includes three groups of students: general education students, students with hearing impairments, students under police supervision.

Communication among these groups has been effective because students help and support one another. She also described new principles of staff communication during the war: focusing on facts rather than emotions (because emotions can destabilize teams), not taking offense personally, concentrating on common tasks and shared responsibility. Teacher D added: “During mixed learning, children communicate much more actively. Joint art therapy, lessons in the botanical garden, and outdoor activities help a lot. Children become active when they have real opportunities to meet.”

Teachers’ Self-Created Support Systems

Teacher E described a grassroots support initiative:“We have created our own support system—women’s conversations. Teachers meet regularly online and talk about daily life: recipes, medicines, household tasks, child-rearing. These conversations make us feel that we are not alone.” She emphasized that they have

clear rules: “We do not discuss the war or the news. We try to read the news less. This really helps.” Teacher F described institutional support: “At my school, psychologists conduct psychological trainings six times a year, such as ‘Fundamentals of Psychological Self-Help in Crisis Situations.’ These are held online and help us a lot.” She noted that some trainings naturally become informal women’s conversations, where teachers can share pain and emotions: “These conversations have meaning.”

Diverse Perspectives on Social Support

Teacher G summarized key conditions for communication during war: involvement of all participants—teachers, parents, students; use of art therapy; opportunities for real meetings in shelters or in nature. She emphasized the importance of adaptive intelligence—the ability to adjust quickly to constantly changing conditions—and identified sources of support: friends, colleagues, family, nature, self-discipline, inner strength, and a sense of responsibility for the younger generation. She also referred to a teacher who previously wrote painful messages in the chat but later wrote: “Belief in victory gives us the strength to live.”

In contrast, Teacher H expressed skepticism: “Teachers are extremely overworked and exhausted. There are many meetings, but they are not effective. Information overload prevents us from receiving real support.” In response, the author introduced the concept of information intoxication—a state in which excessive information overwhelms individuals and reduces their capacity to process support meaningfully.

Teacher I echoed this concern: “Teachers are physically and emotionally overwhelmed. Many events and meetings are mandatory, but they are not effective. It is hard to get support this way.” At the same time, she emphasized remaining resources: “We still have recovery resources—hobbies, nature, close people. During the war, some teachers ended relationships, others formed new ones, changed hobbies, and redefined their roles and self-awareness.”

This discussion revealed that social support during war is neither uniform nor guaranteed. It can be deeply healing in some contexts and insufficient or exhausting in others. Teachers are actively experimenting—creating informal support systems, redefining communication, and adapting European ideas to wartime realities.

Rather than idealized models, what emerges is context-sensitive social support: fragile, imperfect, but deeply human. These shared efforts demonstrate that even under extreme conditions, teachers continue to search for connection, meaning, and ways to sustain life together.

Chapter 8. Restoring and Protecting Your Energy

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Rather than asking how to regain energy, many teachers asked how to continue living and working without collapsing under prolonged exhaustion.

You spend your days under shelling and air-raid sirens, while continuing demanding work and supporting students. Under such conditions, energy is easily depleted. Many teachers experience chronic exhaustion and symptoms of burnout. In wartime, maintaining and restoring energy is not simply a matter of self-care; it becomes a central psychological challenge.

The authors believe that sustaining energy requires two complementary approaches:

1. reducing unnecessary energy depletion, and
2. replenishing energy in realistic and meaningful ways.

Both are essential.

Reducing Energy Depletion

In wartime, a great deal of energy is inevitably consumed simply by adapting to reality. This external burden cannot be eliminated. However, internal energy depletion—the wear and tear that occurs within ourselves—can often be reduced.

One major source of internal depletion repeatedly mentioned by teachers is anticipatory anxiety: a constant state of waiting for something bad to happen. In the Zaporizhzhia group, teachers often described this as “waiting all the time, even when nothing is happening.” Another source of depletion is impatience and self-blame, especially when teachers feel tired, unmotivated, or unable to escape difficult realities such as work pressure, strained relationships, or unpleasant tasks.

To reduce energy depletion, it is important to:

1) reduce anticipatory anxiety,
2) find meaning in both work and enjoyment,

3) reduce self-blame by living “as it is,”

4) remain committed to the present moment.

1) How to Reduce Anticipatory Anxiety

Many teachers reported that even during relatively calm periods, they remained tense, waiting for disaster. Long-term exposure to war conditions intensifies anticipatory anxiety. Paradoxically, attempts to suppress or control anxiety often increase fixation on it, creating a vicious cycle.

In many cases, fear is intensified not by what is actually happening, but by what might happen. Anxiety also interferes with planning, and the inability to plan further increases anxiety. Several teachers noted that simply hearing others describe the same experience reduced their sense of isolation, even when anxiety itself did not disappear.

A key premise is to acknowledge that the future cannot be fully controlled, especially during war. While we cannot manage what has not yet occurred, we can prepare flexibly. Planning is helpful—not to achieve certainty or perfection, but to create partial structure and realistic direction.

2) Finding “Meaning for Me” in Work and Enjoyment

In group discussions, teachers often said that they could clearly explain the social meaning of their work, yet struggled to find what they called “meaning for me.” Teaching, daily chores, and family responsibilities all have value, but unpleasant duties are often experienced only as obligations.

Reflecting on “What does this mean for me?” can reduce energy loss. Sometimes meaning lies not in enjoyment but in simply doing what must be done. Accepting this reality can itself conserve energy.

The same applies to enjoyment. Many pre-war sources of pleasure—travel, entertainment, deep concentration—are no longer effective. Small pleasures may feel insignificant, yet they are essential. Some teachers expressed guilt about

enjoying even small things during the war. However, temporary and modest pleasures accumulate over time and help sustain life.

Do not compare current pleasures with pre-war life. Writing a diary, brushing your hair slowly, massaging your body, cooking something special, or simply acknowledging your effort—all have meaning. Morita Therapy emphasizes non-judgment: even small positive experiences have value.

3) Using the Power of Art

Art did not "restore" energy in a dramatic way for most teachers. However, many described it as helping them endure another day without breaking down.

Teachers shared various creative practices that supported them:

Write & Reflect: keeping a diary, writing poems or letters to release emotions and organize thoughts.

Create: drawing, painting, origami, or handcrafts, which bring calm through physical engagement.

Listen & Play: listening to music or playing an instrument to regulate emotions.

Share: singing with colleagues, crafting together, or holding small exhibitions to foster solidarity.

Rituals: spending 5–10 minutes sketching or writing at the end of the day to shift from work mode to rest.

Art allows energy to circulate rather than stagnate.

4) Self-Compassion: Living "As It Is" and Committing to the Present

Living as it is (arugamama in Morita Therapy) means releasing rigid images of what we should be. Idealized self-images collapse easily and demand constant effort, leading to anger, self-criticism, and exhaustion.

Several teachers said that self-compassion felt unfamiliar or even inappropriate at first, especially when they compared their own suffering with that of soldiers or displaced families. This hesitation itself became an important topic of discussion.

Instead of harsh self-judgment, teachers are encouraged to speak kindly to themselves and to treat themselves with the same care they offer others. Helping others and helping oneself are not opposites.

Being committed to the present frees us from the pain of the past and anxiety about the future. In this moment—here and now—you are alive, breathing, and there are aspects of safety and health present. Focusing on this moment allows energy to be conserved and restored.

Exercise (Neff & Germer, 2018)

Here we do compassion meditation. Compassion meditation is a Buddhist tradition in which one wishes for the happiness of oneself and others, and for the liberation of oneself and others from suffering. Everyone should sit relaxed. You can also lie down. Close your eyes half-closed 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, just realise that it is a thought or feeling, let it go and return to repeating the phrases. Warm, tender feelings may arise, which you keep in mind and return to the repetition of the phrases. As you get used to it, gradually expand the target to include benefactors, close people, neutral people (people who do not harbour positive or negative emotions), 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".

If you are deeply sad. Your head is full of self-blame, "I wanted to do this, I am 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 couple of gentle breaths, repeat to the rhythm of your breathing, phrases of your own choosing, 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.

If you are tormented by anger. Even during meditation, you may look 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 don't feel any kindness', etc., and then you may tend to get angry again, saying, 'I'm meditating, I shouldn't be angry'. When accepting the 'angry' self as it is, as in the case of sadness, one 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 accept 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 nurtured 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 things, we realise 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.

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

We can improve 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!

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

Questions for discussion

1. How do you preserve your energy and prevent burnout under wartime conditions?

2. In what ways does art or creative activity help you sustain energy during the war?

At the beginning of the discussion, many teachers were quiet and hesitant to speak. It appeared difficult for them to talk about their own exhaustion or lack of energy. The authors sensed that some teachers felt they had little positive experience to share, which may have contributed to the silence.

However, as the discussion gradually unfolded, several meaningful voices emerged.

Teacher A, who had remained silent during earlier training sessions, spoke up for the first time and even turned on her camera. She shared that what helps her preserve energy is changing activities and environments—moving to a different place, listening to music, visiting exhibitions, and consciously shifting her focus. She also emphasized the importance of psychological trainings during the war and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in these sessions.

Teacher B spoke about the restorative effect of walking in nature, meeting with friends, and traveling when possible. Even short changes in environment helped her feel less exhausted.

Teacher C highlighted the importance of fiction and literature. She described how some children who were forced to move abroad still vividly remember the books they read together at the beginning of the war. As an example, she mentioned Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl. She expressed appreciation for the curriculum and textbooks that include such works, noting their lasting emotional impact on students.

Teacher D described her work with children in a shelter, which is dark, cold, and physically uncomfortable. She works in two shifts each day and noted that small forms of care—such as hot tea and coffee provided by the administration—make a significant difference. For her, communication with colleagues in the shelter is itself a source of energy. She also emphasized the role of physical activity, including

dancing and yoga, and noted that children are motivated to learn when textbooks and lessons are engaging.

Teacher E stressed the importance of limiting excessive work. She said that working too much inevitably leads to exhaustion, while maintaining boundaries, eating well, and staying physically active help preserve energy.

Teacher F offered words of encouragement to the group: “You are extraordinary. You help your students enormously, and most importantly, you are alive and healthy. You have survived and preserved your health under extremely difficult conditions.”

One of the authors added a personal reflection, sharing a video she had created during the war on the theme “The Amazing in the Ordinary,” featuring an old tree she encountered in western Ukraine. The tree was presented as a symbol of endurance and life.

Finally, one of the authors shared her own experience from the early stage of the war. She spoke about listening to lectures by scientists, philosophers, psychologists, writers, and actors. These thoughtful conversations provided her with inspiration and strength. She noted that war changes not only daily life but also consciousness and mentality. To prevent absurdity and moral disintegration from penetrating one’s inner world, it is important to remain connected to thoughtful voices and to rely on art and intellectual engagement.

Chapter 9. Communicating with Adults and Children in Crisis Situations

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During the trainings, teachers raised many questions about communication under wartime conditions. These questions reflected not only technical difficulties, but also deep emotional strain. Broadly, they concerned the following three areas:

1. Emotional coping in front of students.

Teachers asked how to speak when their own emotions were overwhelmed—for example, when discussing war-related literary works and experiencing trembling voices, choking sensations, or sudden tears.

2. Communicating with students

Questions focused on how to respond to apathetic or withdrawn students, how to address painful topics without causing further harm, how to communicate with adolescents under prolonged war stress, and how to bridge gaps between different generations.

3. Communicating with parents

Teachers described difficulties when parents misunderstood teachers' intentions, held unrealistic expectations about teachers' responsibilities, or expressed unmotivated aggression.

These questions show that communication in crisis situations cannot be reduced to technique alone. It requires emotional awareness, flexibility, and care.

Main Ways of Communication

Communication generally takes three forms:

1. Problem solving. communication aimed at identifying a problem and finding a concrete solution. Teachers often rely on this approach because it feels practical and responsible, especially during wartime.
2. Facilitating insight. Communication that encourages awareness by observing facts, asking questions, and helping the other person reflect on their situation and feelings.

3. “Being with”. Communication that conveys the message “I am with you.” This may involve silence, calm presence, eye contact, or simply staying nearby, rather than speaking.

Communication Styles and Misunderstandings

Differences in communication styles can easily lead to misunderstanding. Some people prefer to think things through alone before speaking, while others expect immediate discussion and emotional sharing. When these styles clash, one side may feel pressured, while the other feels ignored or dismissed.

Teachers may unintentionally push for answers in the belief that this is responsible behavior, while the other person experiences it as overwhelming. Recognizing these differences allows teachers to shift their approach and reduce unnecessary conflict.

Gender differences in communication also exists. For example, ‘Husbands on the run and wives in pursuit’. Men, because of the education they have received and their need to be ‘masculine’, cannot discuss casually and prefer a style where they think things through on their own before declaring to others, which they consider to be a responsible and considerate approach. Women, on the other hand, find it irresponsible, unfair and irritating. We should therefore also make effective use of insight facilitating and 'being with'. One way to do this is through NVC.

Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, is a framework that has been widely used in conflict and crisis settings. It is particularly helpful under harsh conditions, where emotional resources are limited.

The key elements of NVC can be summarized as follows:

1. Core orientation: compassion offered from the heart

2. Common obstacles: moralizing, judging, comparing people, blaming others for one's discomfort, and forcing one's own desires

3. Four elements of communication: observation, feelings, needs, and requests

1) Observation

Observation means describing what is happening without evaluation or judgment. This distinction is difficult but essential. For example, saying "You are irresponsible" is an evaluation, whereas saying "You did not submit your homework as promised" describes an observable fact. Learning to separate observation from evaluation requires practice, and mistakes are part of the learning process.

* Observation or evaluation (exercise).

Evaluation: "You are irresponsible." ✕

Observation: "You did not hand in your homework as promised." ✓

Evaluation: "He has always been apathetic in class recently." ✕

Observation: "He often looked down or away during class. Occasionally, he raised his eyes, but he did not make eye contact with me." ✓

Evaluation: "He is a selfish person." ✕

Observation: "He made the decision alone this time, without consulting us about what was important to us." ✓

2) Feelings and 3) Needs

Expressing feelings may feel uncomfortable or embarrassing, yet it often reduces conflict. NVC emphasizes that feelings arise not directly from others' actions, but from unmet needs. For instance, anger when someone is late may reflect a need for respect or a desire not to waste time.

When teachers receive negative messages, they may instinctively blame themselves or blame the other person. NVC encourages another option: noticing one's own feelings and needs, and, when possible, recognizing the feelings and needs behind the other person's words.

* Express feelings (exercises).

The following examples show the difference between evaluating the other person and expressing one's own feelings.

Evaluation: "You hate me." ×

Feeling: "I feel sad and deeply hurt." ✓

Evaluation: "When you were silent, I felt neglected." ×

Feeling: "When you were silent, I felt lonely and worried." ✓

Evaluation: "I am misunderstood by you." ×

Feeling: "I feel disappointed when I hear you say that." ✓

4)Requests

A genuine request respects the other person's autonomy and allows refusal. The purpose of a request is not to control behavior, but to build connection and trust. Requests are most effective when they focus on specific, observable actions rather than abstract traits.

*Express requests (exercises).

The purpose of a request in Nonviolent Communication is not to control the other person, but to create connection and mutual understanding. A genuine request is concrete, doable, and leaves room for the other person's choice.

Request (respecting autonomy):

"I have expectations of you, but I want to respect your wishes." ✓

Evaluation / Abstract demand:

“I want you to be more confident.” ✕

Concrete request:

“I would like you to speak up in front of other students.” ✓

Vague or coercive request:

“I want you to tell me the honest truth about today’s meeting.” ✕

Clear and specific request:

“Could you tell me what you thought about what I said at the meeting, and if there is anything you would like to see changed?” ✓

Empathy: Listening With Presence

Empathy has strong healing power. Empathy means to empty your mind and listen with your whole being. Not having to do anything, just being there. Listening to the other person's experience with respect (Rosenberg, 2012).

Teachers also learned that when it feels difficult to empathize with others, it may be because their own need for empathy is unmet. Briefly acknowledging one’s own pain or taking a short pause can make it easier to be present again.

How to empathize? Pay attention to all the other person's messages. Give the person enough time and space to express themselves to their satisfaction and to feel understood. Do not encourage or give advice (as this can be frustrating for the other person). Empathize with their 'no' or silence. It is important for the listener to know what is really happening inside the other person (feelings and needs) and to be with them.

Barriers to empathy: giving advice (intellectual understanding), superciliousness, comforting, commiserating, self-talk, cutting the conversation short, correcting mistakes, interrogating ('when did it start').

What to do when it's hard for you to empathize?

The cause of the unwillingness to empathize with others often includes the fact that one's own desire for empathy with others is not being fulfilled. Countermeasures are.

1) Confide in the other person that you cannot empathize with them because of your pain. This may help the other person to empathize with you.
2) (Emergency measures) Empathize with yourself. Listen to your inner self and know what is happening inside you. Then, conversely, you can better hear what is happening outside, and in just a few seconds your energy will naturally be released, and you will be able to be there for others.
3) (Emergency measures) Once physically gone.

5, Express your anger

Stop and take a deep breath → realize what you are assuming → know your needs → empathize with the other person and express that your feelings and needs are not being met.

6, Communicate with yourself: caring for yourself too.

When we fail, instead of reprimanding ourselves, we find clues to growth by following a process of grieving (looking back on the past, grieving and knowing our needs) and forgiving ourselves (sympathizing and accepting both our regret for our past behaviour and the self that made us take that behaviour).

Transform yourself out of a genuine desire to contribute to the wellbeing of others and yourself.

Chapter 10. Psychological self-help in the context of the impact of war on family and personal life

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This chapter is based on questions repeatedly raised by Ukrainian teachers in our previous meetings. These questions reflect deep concerns about family relationships, communication, and psychological wellbeing under prolonged wartime conditions. Broadly, they can be grouped into four main themes:

1. How attitudes toward human relationships change during wartime (including emotional burnout and withdrawal).
2. How to maintain bonds with family and close loved ones under separation, loss, aggression, depression, and military involvement.
3. How to communicate with people experiencing various mental health difficulties.
4. The negative health consequences of living under constant danger and uncertainty.

Below, we address each theme in turn.

1. How People Change in Times of War

Survival Mode and Adaptation

During war, many people quickly enter a survival mode, in which priorities shift toward safety and basic needs. This adaptation affects interpersonal attitudes and communication in several ways.

First, people often become more cautious, reserved, or pragmatic in their relationships. Emotional openness may decrease as energy is redirected toward coping with daily threats.

Second, attention tends to focus on family and a small circle of close relationships. In crisis, relatives may become more protective and nurturing toward each other, while becoming less socially engaged with others.

Third, prolonged exposure to danger, uncertainty, and loss places heavy psychological strain on individuals. Heightened anxiety, withdrawal, irritability, or aggression can appear as coping responses rather than personality changes.

Fourth, moral and ethical perceptions may shift. Under wartime pressure, behaviors once considered unacceptable may be rationalized as necessary for survival, blurring previously clear moral boundaries.

Fifth, people respond differently to prolonged distress. Some develop increased empathy and solidarity, while others experience compassion fatigue, becoming emotionally exhausted and less responsive to others' suffering.

Finally, for some individuals, war brings increased resilience and a stronger sense of purpose. These people often channel their energy into helping others, supporting communities, or sustaining meaningful work despite hardship.

2. How to Maintain Bonds with Family and Loved Ones

1) Maintaining Bonds During Family Separation (Ukraine and Abroad)

In many Ukrainian families women and children relocate abroad, while husbands or elderly parents remain in Ukraine. Financial responsibility often stays with those inside the country, creating unique pressures.

This situation may lead to emotional strain, resentment, or loneliness among family members who bear economic and caregiving burdens. Differences in living conditions abroad can also create cultural and value-based misunderstandings.

At the same time, many families demonstrate remarkable resilience. Separation can deepen appreciation for each other's safety and strengthen emotional commitment, even across distance. Helpful approaches include: Setting shared family goals (saving money, planning reunion, maintaining routines); Sharing daily life through journals, photos, or short messages to maintain emotional continuity; Sustaining hope for reunion and future stability by focusing on small, meaningful daily actions.

2) Managing Aggression Within the Family

Aggression within families often increases under chronic stress. Helpful strategies include recognizing triggers, encouraging physical outlets for tension, and establishing predictable daily routines that restore a sense of stability.

Creating “cool-down spaces” at home allows family members to step away when emotions escalate. Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is particularly useful in expressing feelings and needs without blame and reducing escalation during conflict.

3) Depression and Apathy in the Family

Depression and apathy are common reactions to prolonged stress and loss. Families can support recovery by maintaining simple, purposeful routines and avoiding overwhelming expectations.

Encouraging gentle physical activity, spending time outdoors, and normalizing conversations about mental health can reduce isolation and stigma. Importantly, seeking professional help should be framed as strength, not weakness.

3. Communicating with People Experiencing Mental Health Difficulties

When interacting with individuals experiencing PTSD, panic, despair, hysteria, or emotional breakdowns, it is important not to feel pressured to “fix” them.

From a Morita Therapy perspective, presence itself is support. Being with someone—listening quietly, sharing silence, offering a hug, or simply saying “I’m glad we could meet today”—often has greater healing power than advice or explanations.

At the same time, healthy communication requires clear boundaries. Acknowledging personal limits prevents burnout and allows relationships to remain sustainable.

Flexibility is also essential. War changes people and relationships, and communication styles must adapt accordingly. Patience, openness, and acceptance of change help preserve bonds during instability.

4. Health Consequences of Constant Danger and Uncertainty

Living under ongoing threat affects both physical and mental health. Chronic hypervigilance exhausts the nervous system, weakens immunity, disrupts sleep, and increases psychosomatic symptoms.

Self-help in this context does not mean eliminating fear, but learning to live with it while protecting one's health. Small daily practices—rest, routine, movement, meaningful contact, and self-compassion—help stabilize the body and mind over time.

In wartime, psychological self-help is not about achieving calm or happiness. It is about continuing life, relationships, and responsibility while fear and uncertainty remain. By accepting change, maintaining connection where possible, and caring for oneself alongside others, individuals and families can preserve their psychological strength even under extreme conditions.

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

Question: Share your successful or unsuccessful experience of maintaining relationships (in the family, in the teaching staff, etc.) during the war.

Teacher A said: I live in Zaporizhzhia, but my mother lived in the Kherson region when the war began. The situation in Kherson and the Kherson region is very dangerous, Kherson and part of the Kherson region were occupied. Then Kherson was liberated by Ukrainian troops, but part of the Kherson region remains under occupation. I persuaded my mother for a very long time to move to Zaporizhzhia so that we could be together. But she did not agree for a long time. And for several years it was a big problem for me, because I could not save my mother. However, now the situation has worsened so much that my mother still decided to move to me. We are now together. My mother has the status of an internally displaced person. She cannot return to her home because her village is completely destroyed. But my

mother supports me morally in Zaporizhia. We are together, and this is the most important thing for me now. However, a lot of people still remain in the dangerous territory. They love their land, their homes, and do not want to leave despite the shelling. And I cannot convince other people to move to a safe place. I feel how the relationship between us is changing, because the distance between Zaporizhia and the Kherson region is great. We cannot meet often. We often exchange messages and photos, but this cannot replace live communication. In addition, no pictures can reduce the feeling of anxiety, because we are in the line of fire every day, we are shot every day. Therefore, the feeling of anxiety does not leave us. I think that many more years will pass before we can get rid of the feeling of anxiety. Every day we are shot at. We go to work and are afraid, we return from work and are also afraid, and every night we experience a new horror. Therefore, the connections between people who find themselves in different territories during the war are being destroyed. We do not know what awaits us in the future.

Teacher B said: I myself am from the city of Kramatorsk, Donetsk region. My hometown Kramatorsk is almost completely destroyed. I now live in Zaporizhia. My mother stayed in Kramatorsk for a long time. She was not ready to move to Zaporizhia for a long time. But the time came and she agreed. However, she often has panic attacks and depression because she is torn from her hometown and her house is no longer there. Relations in our family are very tense because we live without light and without joy. We cannot feel joy because we are constantly under gunfire. We are bombed every day. And we have no hope that anything can change.

Teacher C said: I can build successful communication in the family, as well as at school with students and their parents. But the bombings are very difficult every day. We cannot live a full life in conditions of constant danger. Similarly, relationships cannot be full-fledged in conditions of constant danger. We all feel the instability of life and know that at any moment it can change dramatically. We often

help others, but we forget about ourselves. We restrain our emotions and try to keep ourselves within certain limits. We cannot give freedom to our emotions, so we often experience depression. You either break dishes or don't want anything...I often go to the field and scream there. I scream in the field because I can't do it at home or at work. I'm afraid to upset my children or loved ones. Therefore, I have to restrain my emotions or scream in the field so that no one hears except the wind.

I have to scream and cry at a certain moment, because otherwise there may be mental disorders.

One of the author, Psychologist Lyubov Kremenetska said: There is a special technique for living negative emotions. In a box you need to put things that remind you of negative emotions. From time to time you need to open this box and experience your emotions, cry, scream. This box can then be closed and put away. But when the time comes, it can be ope ned again. There can also be a box of positive emotions. We need positive and negative emotions, then we can feel like a full-fledged person.

Chapter 11. Psychological Support for Children Living through the Experience of War

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Children living in a war environment are exposed to continuous danger, uncertainty, and loss. Even when they are physically safe, their psychological world is profoundly affected. Teachers often ask how they can support children emotionally when they themselves are exhausted, anxious, and living under the same conditions.

This chapter focuses on how teachers can provide psychological support to children without turning education into therapy, and without demanding emotional stability from children. Drawing on Morita Therapy, we emphasize supporting children's daily functioning and development while fear and anxiety remain present.

1. How War Affects Children's Psychological World

Children experience war differently from adults. They often lack the language and cognitive capacity to clearly describe fear, loss, or anxiety. As a result, psychological distress is frequently expressed through behavior rather than words.

Common reactions observed in children during wartime include:

Silence or withdrawal

Avoiding eye contact or turning off cameras during online lessons

Apathy, lack of motivation, or refusal to participate

Irritability, aggression, or excessive joking

Difficulty concentrating and remembering

These reactions should not be immediately interpreted as pathology. From the perspective of Morita Therapy, they are natural adaptive responses to a threatening environment. Children, like adults, experience fear of death and loss of safety, but they often express it indirectly. Importantly, such reactions do not mean that a child is "weak" or "broken." They reflect a child's effort to survive psychologically in abnormal circumstances.

2. What Not to Do When Supporting Children

In crisis situations, teachers often feel pressure to “do something” to reduce children’s fear. However, certain well-intentioned approaches can unintentionally increase psychological burden.

Teachers do not need to:

Force children to talk about their feelings

Encourage children to “calm down” or “stop being afraid”

Push positive thinking or optimism

Expect emotional recovery before learning can continue

From a Morita Therapy perspective, trying to eliminate fear or anxiety directly often intensifies distress. Excessive attention to emotions can trap children in a cycle of self-monitoring and avoidance.

Silence, avoidance, or limited participation should be respected as part of a child’s coping process.

3. Morita Therapy–Based Principles for Supporting Children

Morita Therapy offers a framework that can be translated into educational support for children living in war conditions. The focus is not on changing emotions, but on supporting life and development with emotions present.

1) Accept Fear and Anxiety Without Trying to Eliminate Them

Children do not need to feel calm, brave, or positive in order to learn or live.

Helpful messages include: “It is okay to be afraid.”; “You can study or play even when you feel scared.”; “Fear comes and goes.”; Acceptance does not mean resignation. It means recognizing fear as a natural reaction to real danger, without judging or suppressing it.

When fear is accepted rather than fought, it is less likely to dominate attention.

2) Support Purpose-Oriented Action

In Morita Therapy, action is not a tool to remove fear. Action is a way to continue life despite fear.

For children, purpose-oriented action may include:

Participating in lessons

Completing small tasks

Creating something (drawing, writing, crafting)

Helping classmates or teachers

Keeping simple routines

The key point is that action does not wait for emotional readiness. Children are allowed to act while feeling anxious, tired, or sad. Over time, the accumulation of "I did something today" becomes a source of quiet confidence.

3) Maintain Ordinary Daily Life

Ordinary life plays a crucial psychological role during war. School routines, lessons, seasonal topics, and everyday conversations provide children with a sense of continuity.

Daily educational activities function as: Psychological anchors, Proof that life continues, A structure that holds children when emotions are unstable.

From this perspective, education itself becomes psychological support. Teachers do not need to add special therapeutic interventions; maintaining ordinary schooling is already meaningful.

4. Communicating with Children Who Do Not Respond

Some children remain silent, avoid communication, or refuse to participate. This often causes teachers great concern.

It is important to understand that:

Silence is also a form of communication,

Withdrawal may protect children from emotional overload

Readiness to engage differs from child to child

Teachers can: Continue inviting participation without pressure, Offer choices rather than demands, Accept partial engagement (listening without speaking), Maintain a predictable presence, Respecting a child's pace allows trust to develop naturally.

5. Protecting Teachers While Supporting Children

Supporting children during war places teachers under significant emotional strain. Teachers absorb children's fear while carrying their own.

Morita Therapy emphasizes that teachers:

Do not need to understand or heal everything,

Do not need to feel emotionally strong,

Are not responsible for eliminating fear,

What matters is the continuation of role. Teaching, guiding, and being present—imperfectly but consistently—supports both children and teachers.

Supporting children does not require emotional heroism. It requires steadiness.

Discussion Note: Voices from the Group

1. Problems Teachers Face in the Educational Process

Teachers described a wide range of difficulties that directly affect classroom practice under ongoing war conditions. These challenges are not isolated problems but are interconnected and cumulative.

Emotional and behavioral instability among students

Teachers reported increased student aggression, agitation, apathy, and emotional withdrawal. Many students lack warmth, attention, and a sense of safety, which makes sustained engagement in learning extremely difficult.

Severe difficulties with concentration and motivation

Constant rocket attacks—sometimes several times a day—leave students exhausted and unable to concentrate. Many students refuse to answer questions, and teachers feel they cannot force participation. Motivation to study has significantly declined.

Dependence on mobile phones and constant exposure to news

Both students and teachers rely heavily on phones and the internet to follow the news. While this provides a sense of control, it also increases anxiety and distractibility, making it harder to remain present in lessons.

Balancing gentleness and structure

Teachers struggle to find an appropriate balance between being emotionally gentle and maintaining necessary boundaries and structure. Excessive strictness risks harming already fragile students, while excessive leniency may lead to further disengagement.

2. Positive Practices Observed by Teachers

Despite these difficulties, teachers also shared meaningful positive experiences that indicate resilience and adaptive educational practices.

Strengthening teacher–student relationships

Some teachers noticed that students began to thank them for lessons and express appreciation more openly. A partnership-based relationship—rather than a hierarchical one—was seen as especially effective.

Maintaining socialization even in shelters

Teachers reported that children continue to socialize and connect with each other even during lessons held in shelters. Simply being together in the same physical space was described as psychologically supportive.

Creating small spaces for reality-oriented dialogue

Short, structured discussions about current events (e.g., 3–5 minutes) helped students feel acknowledged and reduced anxiety. Students wanted to hear "good news" and needed reassurance that adults were aware of reality.

Encouragement and emotional safety

Praising students for small successes, allowing mistakes, using humor, and creating a non-threatening learning atmosphere helped reduce fear and resistance to participation.

3. Voices from Group Discussions

Teachers' group discussions highlighted deeper psychological and social dimensions of students' experiences.

Teacher A reported that many boys experience constant fear related to the prospect of fighting. Students feel disoriented and uncertain about their future. Meaningful activities such as volunteering were seen as a way to restore a sense of purpose.

Teacher B emphasized that children's fear is often intensified by parents who constantly talk about danger. Teachers felt a strong need to work with parents to help them reduce fear rather than amplify it. A key unresolved question was how to accept war, absurdity, and death without losing psychological stability.

Teacher C described disruptions in children's biological rhythms: many students stay awake at night due to fear and sleep during the day, making learning

almost impossible. Teachers also noted that they often hide their own difficulties, which increases internal strain.

Teacher D highlighted widespread apathy and lack of motivation, as well as strong dependence on mobile phones as a means of escaping reality. One teacher shared the belief that reclaiming life requires small, step-by-step changes initiated by oneself.

Teacher E discussed the difficulties faced by children who had lived abroad and later returned to war-affected regions. These students often struggle to readapt to wartime conditions. Despite this, teachers expressed continued hope and a strong commitment to supporting students, even while experiencing their own suffering.

This discussion reveals that education under war conditions is not merely a pedagogical challenge but a deeply psychological and relational one. Teachers are required to teach while simultaneously containing fear, loss, exhaustion, and uncertainty—both their own and their students'. At the same time, small relational actions, emotional presence, and realistic expectations emerge as powerful resources for sustaining education and human connection amid crisis.

Chapter 12. Questions Raised by Teachers during the Sessions

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This chapter includes some questions that were also addressed in Study Guide Part 1 published in 2024. However, after exploring teachers' lived experiences in this book—including fear, loss, exhaustion, relationships, energy, and daily educational practice under ongoing war conditions—these questions may now be understood in a different way. Rather than seeking quick solutions, the questions in this chapter invite reflection on how to continue living and educating as life is, amid uncertainty.

The answers presented here are not instructions, but reference points shaped by dialogue, shared experience, and practical wisdom developed together with teachers. This chapter is based on questions raised by teachers during the lectures and the responses we offered at that time. Readers may find that they share similar questions. Our answers may not be complete or definitive; nevertheless, it is our sincere hope that reading them will feel somewhat relieving and help you find ways to make everyday life a little more manageable.

1. Relationships

Q1-1: How to avoid or respond to nervous breakdowns of family members, or coworkers, or students?

A1-1: It is important to recognize early signs of stress, such as mood swings, irritability, or withdrawal, which may signal an approaching breakdown. By noticing these changes, you can offer support before stress becomes overwhelming. Often, simply being there to listen without judgment can help ease the burden and prevent emotional overload. Your calm presence can help others feel more grounded in stressful moments. Show patience, take deep breaths, and maintain a steady tone, as your composed demeanor can positively influence those around you. Encouraging regular breaks to rest and recharge is also essential, as constant pressure can quickly lead to burnout. Set clear boundaries and manage workloads to ensure that

expectations are realistic and manageable. Checking in regularly with family, coworkers, or students helps gauge their stress levels, allowing you to address concerns early and foster a supportive, proactive environment for mental well-being.

Q1-2: In literature or history lessons, teachers use examples from past military events. There are often children in the class who suffered during the Russian-Ukrainian war, they lost their home or relatives. Don't such examples cause additional trauma to children? Maybe it is better to avoid such examples? How to not cause additional psychological trauma to children?

A1-2: Yes, teachers should be very careful about this. Not all students will react the same way. Some may find comfort in shared experiences, while others may feel overwhelmed. Carefully select materials and examples that are educational but less likely to provoke distress. Avoid graphic descriptions of violence or personal stories that closely mirror students' experiences, and emphasize stories of overcoming adversity, acts of courage, and efforts toward peace and reconciliation.

Advance notice is also important. You can let students know when sensitive topics will be discussed. This gives them the opportunity to prepare emotionally or opt out if necessary. You can also provide alternative assignments or activities for students who may find the content too distressing.

Q1-3: How to overcome emotional burnout and unwillingness to communicate with people?

A1-3: We think most teachers feel burnout sometimes because your work is helping people who are exhausted. I am very sorry for that. Please acknowledge and accept your feelings of burnout as a valid response to prolonged stress. Reflect on specific sources of burnout, whether they stem from work, relationships, or obligations, to address them more effectively. When you are unwilling to communicate with people, we think you can escape for a while. Set clear boundaries to protect your energy by limiting commitments and politely declining additional responsibilities. Prioritize

interactions with supportive people, and let close friends, family, or colleagues know you're feeling burnt out—they may offer greater understanding if they're aware of your situation. Also reduce digital overload by setting limits on social media and screen time, as constant connectivity can amplify stress. Healing from burnout takes time, so give yourself space to recover without pressure. By making mindful choices about how you spend your time, you can regain control, renew motivation, and reconnect with others.

Q1-4: Negative consequences for health from constant feeling of danger and uncertainty during war.

A1-4: Yes, the constant feeling of danger and uncertainty during war may have effects on health. For example, increase blood pressure, heart disease, sleep disturbances, digestive issues, anxiety, depression, PTSD, impaired concentration and memory, reduced cognitive flexibility, chronic pain and muscle tension etc.

If you are experiencing these things, it may actually bring some comfort to recognize that they are triggered by the war. Understanding the cause may help provide some relief. Trust in the natural resilience of people and believe that, once the war ends, gradual recovery will follow.

Q1-5: How to survive the pain of losing a loved one and not to think about this loss constantly?

A1-5: It is very painful. You have to allow yourself to experience all emotions that come with grief—sadness, anger, even numbness—without judgment, as expressing these feelings can be cathartic. Be patient with yourself, knowing that healing takes time and there is no "right" way to grieve; give yourself permission to take things one day at a time.

Do you remember our learning about "ambiguous loss"? Rather than choosing "either A or B", "both A and B" is better. In other words, you don't need to try to forget that person. Keep them in your heart. There will be pain, but over time, they

will settle quietly in your heart and become a part of you. Move forward in line with the values you shared with them.

You can do a lot of activities, but please let go of the idea of "getting over it" and instead focus on carrying the loss in a manageable way. Set small goals to move forward, like trying something new or connecting with others, while honoring their memory through positive actions. Healing from loss takes time and self-compassion, but by embracing these steps, you can find a balance between remembrance and moving forward with peace and purpose.

Q1-6: How to keep the relationship with my husband who is in the army?

A1-6: You find it hard, and I agree with you. I feel your deep love towards him.

When constant direct communication isn't possible, you can use symbolic methods to maintain relationship. For example, write letters or keep a journal to record your daily life and feelings for your husband. Let him know how much you appreciate his sacrifices and dedication, and acknowledge the important roles you both play. You can share these with him when you reunite. You might also synchronize certain activities, such as agreeing to look at the night sky at the same time, to create a shared sense of connection. Wearing matching bracelets or rings can also serve as a simple but effective reminder of your bond. If possible, sending thoughtful and care packages, can remind him of home and reinforce your support.

Looking forward to reuniting can keep your spirits up. Plan future activities or trips together to create something positive to anticipate. Additionally, connecting with other military families can provide a supportive community that understands the unique challenges you face, offering comfort and friendship.

Q1-7: How to tell the truth to a person, if you know that he or she will get angry?

A1-7: So you have to treat with these angry people in your work, and it is exhausting. Delivering a truth that might provoke anger is challenging, so it's best to start by choosing a calm, private setting. This helps create a space where the person feels

safe and less likely to respond defensively. Additionally, timing matters—try to have the conversation when they're not already stressed or distracted, which will make them more receptive.

Begin by acknowledging that the information may be difficult to hear, using phrases like, "I know this might be upsetting." This shows respect for their feelings from the start and helps set a tone of empathy. Empathy is crucial; recognizing their perspective can make them feel respected, even if the message is hard to accept. Finally, give them time to process the information. If they react strongly, suggest returning to the conversation when they're ready. Following up later can show that you're there to support them, even if the initial reaction was one of anger, helping to maintain trust in the relationship.

Q1-8: How to build a relationship between people who are in the center of military events and people who are far away from the war? The feeling of guilt does not disappear ...

A1-8: You feel guilty but not only you feel like this. A lot of people at a distance feel guilty or helplessness, while people in the war zone might feel isolated. Openly acknowledging these feelings can build a sense of safety in the relationship. Avoid comparing hardships, as this can unintentionally diminish each other's experiences. When you feel guilty about being away from the conflict, express it honestly without making it the main focus, which helps keep the conversation centered on the experience of people you want to help. Accepting the limits of your help is also key. Recognize that some things are beyond your control; you may not be able to change their circumstances, but you can offer love, comfort, and stability. I think you are channeling guilt into positive actions, like volunteering or raising awareness. Remember that guilt doesn't necessarily mean you're doing something wrong, and practicing self-compassion is vital for your own well-being and in supporting others. Lastly, give each other time to adapt, as intense experiences can reshape relationships. Be open to how your relationship may grow and evolve through these

challenges, and be patient with the process. Building a connection across different realities can be difficult, but with empathy, understanding, and time, it's possible to create a strong, supportive bond.

Q1-9: If a person is often nervous, hysterical, throwing everyone off balance, how do relatives communicate with him or her? Pretend that nothing is going on? But no one can easily keep the balance in wartime.

A1-9: When communicating with someone in an emotional state, acknowledge their feelings calmly to show empathy without escalating stress. Staying neutral and setting boundaries, like saying, "I want to support you, but it's hard to help when things get intense," can keep conversations constructive and grounded. During calmer times, discuss boundaries openly and gently encourage them to express fears or frustrations in a supportive way. Addressing issues when emotions are stable can help prevent future outbursts, and asking, "What would help you feel a bit safer right now?" can shift focus to manageable steps. Maintain empathy without absorbing their stress. Compassion paired with boundaries allows you to be supportive without compromising your well-being, helping you stay steady without getting drawn into their negativity.

Q1-10: If a person is constantly in the state of "everything is lost, we are all going to perish", how to communicate with him or her? Is there a point to persuade him or her or to ignore him or her, to limit communication?

A1-10: When someone is persistently in a state of hopelessness, engaging with them requires careful balance. Begin by acknowledging their feelings without agreeing with their negative beliefs. Validating statements like, "I see you're feeling scared or hopeless," can help them feel understood without reinforcing their pessimism. Avoid arguments, as contradicting their beliefs may intensify their defensiveness; instead, gently steer the conversation toward grounded, manageable topics. Shifting the focus to practical matters can redirect their energy from despair to action. For

instance, ask, “What would help make today feel a bit better?” Encouraging present-moment focus, like small mindfulness practices, can also help anchor them in something positive. It’s equally important to protect your own emotional health by setting boundaries, especially if their negativity begins to affect your well-being. Taking breaks or limiting the depth of your engagement can allow you to remain supportive without feeling overwhelmed. Lastly, remember you’re not responsible for changing their outlook. Suggesting professional help, if they’re open to it, can provide them with additional support, and you can subtly encourage positive distractions, like favorite hobbies, to help ease their mindset. Protecting your mental health while showing empathy enables you to maintain a supportive relationship without allowing their pessimism to drain you.

2. Morita therapy and children

Q2-1: Is Morita therapy used only for adults or can it be used for children?

A2-1: Yes, Morita therapy is also applied to children. If they understand and agree to the concepts of Morita therapy, then therapy will be helpful to them. Morita Therapy is especially helpful to children with neurosis, and these children often better understand and be more agree to it.

3. Anxiety, panic attacks and fear

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

Q3-2: When events occur that I cannot control but affect my life, I start to get nervous, my hands shake, my heart races, and my breathing is rapid. How can I pull myself together, 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 to reduce the fear of driving?

A: Your anxiety and panic attacks have different inducements, such as negative events uncontrollable, deaths of your admired people, bad news of the war. You feel yourself uncontrollable physically and mentally, and this uncontrollable feeling then make you blame yourself and increase the anxiety and fear. Do you remember the two vicious cycles we learned? One is “attention and sense”. 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. According to Morita Therapy, we don’t focus on the treatment of panic attacks. First, please know that your symptoms are not deceases of the body, they are from your mental state. Second, we have methods to do. Our lesson “Coping with fear and anxiety”, please go over it. Third, believe in your natural healing power!

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 them, they also will help you. And do something good for him. Teacher Q3-2, what kind of things do you feel uncontrollable? Maybe you need to separate things into controllable and uncontrollable ones. The war changed a lot of things into uncontrollable ones. Try to expect and do things you can control. Teacher Q3-3, Ukrainian patriots have fortitude, even they died, their spirits will be remembered and pass on. They affected you and you can believe that there are a lot of people like you, encouraged by them, that these people including you, will save this country. Teacher Q3-4, the information of the war is not good really. But you have to move on, life is moving on every day. Do things you can. If the information makes you sick, sometimes shut them off and surrender yourself to the God. Teacher A3-5, 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 endure, continue to drive longer. If not, stop and try next time.

4. Loss and pain

Q4-1: One of my family members is dead. I am in abroad and will go back to my hometown a few months later. How to ease the pain from the loss, how to overcome fear of loneliness. I want to keep living, to enjoy every day, but the pain and fear are destroying me.

A:4-1 You lost both your family member and your loving hometown, and have to live in a foreign country. You have experienced nearly 2 years occupied situation. Your family member worked for the government, which made you have to hide him from the Russians and be always worried. After so many terrible events, you gained the freedom again while he died. That is a too painful experience! You cannot hope. Anyone in your situation will feel like that. Now you can go back to hometown but it is no longer a loving place as it used to be. You may face more painful things again. But you are working, taking care of your students. You want to enjoy daily 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, not your fault, and you couldn't prevent the bad things. Acknowledge your feelings to this family member and other people. Maybe you have ambivalence feelings, because he might 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 every day. You needn't forget him, and don't consider being happy is a betrayal to him. He wanted you be happy. Future is ambiguous. You needn't look into the future if you cannot. Just do something you can. Coming back to hometown and see the belongings of him will make you painful, 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 for you something good as well, although you don't know at this 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 reason living far away. It's not your fault. Everyone should do things he or she is able to do, which is the best way to contribute to Ukraine. You cannot control other people's thinking, as well as your feeling of guilt, so try to acknowledge your guilt, please. Meantime, tell yourself that you are doing good things for Ukraine, and give the love to yourself which others couldn't.

Teacher Q5-2. Your parents' story is very sad. And I am moved by your love to them. We all have time regretting that we could have done better in the past, while in each time, we have already done the best. Everyone has his faith. Someone has a happy childhood while others don't. Someone has success in life while others have a lot of failures... Your parents have their own lives, as well as a kind daughter worrying about them. Do things you can, to love them. You cannot change or control things 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, although I don't really want to sleep.

A6-1: You are working hard, helping the students, and raising up your family. You are tired, exhausted. Your body wants you to lie down and take a rest, and sometimes

your mental state does it too. If you don't really want to sleep, how about move your body a little? For example, do some exercises or just map the floor. Once you start moving your body in a slow and rhythmic fashion, your autonomic nerves will adjust. Try this and remember that concentrate on what you are doing, but not thinking about other things while doing it. Be HERE and NOW.

7. Hates

Q: During the war, how can one not "stoop" to hating everything Russian? Are there any methods for distinguishing between "friends" and "foes" without being consumed by hatred?

A: Distinguishing between friends and enemies without hatred is very difficult. Because in our evolutionary processes, we hate the enemies and have fears of the enemies help us to fight or flee, and then we survive. Hate is natural, and adaptive in evolution. But too much of them will also destroy us. Accept the hate in yourself or in other people as a natural thing, but don't be absorbed in it. Leave the hatred circumstance, if you feel uncomfortable.

8. Protect yourself

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

A8-1: Maybe you help people who you don't know well, and you may sacrifice yourself. Why can't you reject them? Think about it. Is it something related to 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 leave your environment for a while and do something different, a small trip to the country side, or go to see some old friends, or start painting or something new, or something you liked 20 years ago. Try to leave your routine for some time.

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

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

9. Past, future and now

Q9-1: 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.

A9-1: It’s really hard to let go the past events. Have you ever seen the American film “Superman”? In the last, the superman gave a kiss to his lover and let her forget all happened between them, to help her let go of the past. We all want this kiss. But we have another magic tool– kiss from the Time. Time can ease our pain, little by little. When the terrible past comes to you again, acknowledge your negative feelings, and hold it for a while. Tell yourself ’That horror cannot hurt me now. At this moment, and here, I am safe’. Imagine a dear person is hugging you and what will he or she say to you at that time. You are tired, exhausted, but are making progress and gaining survival wisdom and courage. Don’t blame yourself not being able to always doing the right thing and enjoy the life you’re having now. You’re in the progress of improving your psychological condition.

Q2-2: How to stop living in "rose-colored glasses" and unfulfilled hopes?

A2-2: Please, don’t stop hoping. Our hopes may be fulfilled at once or in a period of time, but they are seeds, when the season comes, they grow up and become reality, like trees. Rose-colored glasses are not bad, if they sometimes give us happiness.

Keep them in the bottom of your heart and do what you can do now. Wait for the day they become useful again. That day will come.

Chapter 13. Practical Advice for Difficult Days

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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 rule of emotions" to deal with them. The rule 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’s 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.

Anyactionisalwaysbetterthaninaction

Movement is very important in war. If you stop, the enemy will kill you. And if you move, you have at least some chance 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.

Much of the advice presented in this chapter may appear familiar, as similar points were introduced in Study Guide Part 1. What has changed in this book is not the content itself, but the context in which it is read. After examining fear, loss, energy, relationships, and self-care through real experiences and discussions, this advice is no longer simply guidance to follow, but support to return to when needed. In times of uncertainty, these words are not meant to reduce fear or resolve difficulties, but to accompany teachers as they continue living and educating as life is.

Conclusions

Living and Educating as Life Is, amid Uncertainty

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The conclusions presented in this volume remain provisional, as the war in Ukraine continues and the psychological realities faced by teachers are still unfolding. Unlike programs that aim at recovery, emotional relief, or symptom reduction, this study guide has focused on how Ukrainian teachers continue to live and educate as life is, amid uncertainty, fear, loss, and ongoing responsibility.

Across the chapters of Part 2, teachers rarely described themselves as "feeling better" or "having recovered." Instead, they spoke of continuing their educational roles—teaching children in shelters, maintaining contact with families, supporting colleagues, and sustaining daily routines—while emotional distress persisted. In this context, resilience did not appear as emotional stability or optimism, but as the ability to remain engaged in life and education despite unresolved uncertainty.

Morita Therapy proved particularly meaningful because it does not demand emotional control, positivity, or the elimination of anxiety. Teachers live in conditions where uncertainty and fear cannot be removed. Morita Therapy validates this reality and offers a framework in which fear and anxiety are understood as natural expressions of the desire for life. Rather than asking teachers to overcome fear, it supports them in continuing meaningful educational action while fear remains present.

Importantly, Part 2 demonstrates that Morita Therapy was not simply applied to Ukrainian teachers; it was reshaped through their lived experiences. Group discussions, reflections, and shared practices show how Ukrainian Morita Therapy emerged through collaboration. Teachers were not passive recipients of psychological knowledge, but active contributors who transformed theory through dialogue, practical wisdom, and everyday educational practice under war conditions.

A central insight of this volume is the psychological value of ordinary educational life. Small, concrete actions—continuing lessons, creating moments of communication, sharing art, maintaining "good enough" relationships, and caring for one's own limited energy—played a crucial role in sustaining both teachers and students. These actions may appear modest, but under prolonged crisis they function as powerful anchors that protect psychological continuity and dignity.

This study guide is not a clinical treatment manual, nor does it aim to cure trauma. Instead, it offers teachers a language, perspective, and practical orientation that help them understand their own psychological experiences without self-blame, recognize the limits of control, and continue educating within those limits. Living and educating "as life is" does not mean resignation; it means responding realistically, responsibly, and humanely to the conditions that exist.

Finally, the experiences documented in Part 2 suggest implications beyond Ukraine. In a world increasingly marked by war, displacement, and social instability, the integration of Morita Therapy principles into educational and supportive contexts offers a valuable model. Even when safety cannot be guaranteed and uncertainty persists, it remains possible to educate, care, and sustain life with purpose.

The Ukrainian Morita Therapy group will continue its work, alongside ongoing reflection and dialogue. As long as uncertainty remains, so too must the effort to live and educate—not by denying fear, but by moving forward with it, grounded in daily life and educational responsibility.

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