

Paul Engel provides support and healing with group therapy

By KEPHERD DANIEL

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Oceanside resident and clinical social worker Paul Engel will be facilitating an eight-week-long group therapy session called "Healing from Emotional Anger and Relational Trauma". The sessions are organized by the Queens Long Island Community Services, in collaboration with the Flushing Jewish Community Council and FamilyKind.

The therapy sessions initially began as an anger management workshop in the fall of 2021, in partnership with FamilyKind, an organization working with families undergoing divorce. However, discussions during the sessions quickly expanded to include topics of relational trauma, gas lighting, and dealing with traumatic narcissists. Due to overlapping issues, the workshop evolved into a comprehensive group addressing both emotional anger and relational trauma.

Engel emphasizes the prevalence of relational trauma beyond divorce situations, including experiences within destructive cults, extreme religious communities, family dynamics, and professional settings involving coercive control. The sessions provide a supportive environment for survivors to share experiences and learn from each other.

"I think primarily, the ratings have been quite high and have been helpful in a number of ways with many people and even a couple of friends," Engel said. There are people who still return some on a regular basis, some of my clients who I work with joined the group as well."

The group sessions typically consist of around 10 to 15 participants and sessions are conducted over Zoom. The group sessions provide a platform for individuals to share their experiences, receive validation, and gain insights into their situations.

Queens resident George Tselios participates in the therapy sessions offered by Engel's group as a means of coping with the emotional trauma resulting from a traumatic divorce.

He initially discovered the group through online searches for trauma therapy and found that it addressed issues such as dealing with divorces and narcissistic backgrounds, which resonated with his own experiences.

Tselios values the group dynamic, where everyone shares similar but unique experiences, providing mutual support and understanding. He appreciates the diverse perspectives brought by both the participants and the facilitators, which enrich the therapeutic process.

"Everybody brings different but yet similar experiences," he said. "We can all relate to each other. Everybody brings something different and we can all relate to something. Could be through emotional trauma, which could be dealing with cults, dealing with traumatic divorces. It could be dealing with a very narcissistic spouse but we all have similar stories. Dr. Paul (Engel) brings something different to the table from his background. It's just one big group session and we all just speak about our experiences and that's what really makes it very therapeutic."



Herald File Photo

Oceanside resident Paul Engel has just over four decades of clinical social work experience and will lead eight virtual group therapy sessions starting March 20 designed to help heal those with anger and relational trauma.

Throughout the sessions, Tselios said he has noticed improvements in his emotional well being and healing process. He credits the group for providing a sense of security and understanding, allowing him to gradually heal from the trauma.

Despite the ongoing nature of his healing journey, he feels optimistic about the progress he has made and plans to continue participating in the sessions for the

foreseeable future.

Lindenhurst resident Virginia Llanos, 47, joined the sessions after encountering the court system due to her divorce and custody battles. She initially found out about the sessions through Family Kind and the workshops helped Virginia deal with emotions related to her divorce, as well as provided guidance on handling these issues with her daughter. Llanos

said she realized that she had been living around those with narcissistic behavior without fully understanding it, and the sessions helped her identify and address these patterns not only in her marriage but also in other relationships.

"It really is great for anyone, even if they're not going through a divorce because I learned that I went through the same behavior through my family members," Llanos said.

Llanos feels a strong sense of support and understanding in the group sessions, where she can express her emotions and receive validation from others who have gone through similar experiences.

"You see that you're not the only one," she said. "This second session, I found that we are very comfortable with each other. It is helpful because you see that you're not alone. We're able to open up and everybody's from different walks of life so you can get a different perspective. It's like a circle of support."

The sessions will continue beyond the initial eight weeks, ensuring ongoing support for survivors of relational trauma. The eight sessions will \$80 for the entire will be held virtually on Wednesdays, starting March 20 at 7:30 to 8:45 p.m. Scholarships are available based on financial need: call (516) 547-4318 for more information.

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IT'S YOUR MONEY By Jonathan Wolfsohn MBA, CFP, EA, ATA



BEWARE OF A NEW SCAM: PART II

The Internal Revenue Service has warned taxpayers to be on the lookout for a new scam mailing that tries to mislead people into believing they are owed a refund.

The letter tells the recipients they need to provide "Filing Information" for their refund. This includes some awkwardly worded requests like this:

"A Clear Phone of Your Driver's License That Clearly Displays All Four (4) Angles, Taken in a Place with Good Lighting."

The letter proceeds to ask for more sensitive information including cell phone number, bank routing information, Social Security number and bank account type, followed by a poorly worded warning:

"(You'll Need to Get This to Get Your Refunds After Filing. These Must Be Given to a Filing Agent Who Will Help You Submit Your Unclaimed Property Claim. Once You Send All The Information Please Try to Be Checking Your Email for Response From The Agents Thanks)"

This letter contains a variety of warning signs, including odd punctuation and a mixture of fonts as well as inaccuracies.

Taxpayers and tax professionals should be alert to fake communications posing as legitimate organizations in the tax and financial community, including the IRS and states. These messages can arrive in the form of an unsolicited text or email to lure unsuspecting victims to provide valuable personal and financial information that can lead to identity theft, including phishing and smishing.

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