

Dr. Gary Belkin is a psychiatrist who approaches mental health as a building block of social policy and progress. He recently founded Billion Minds as a “think-action tank.” The intention of Billion Minds is to link mental health to problems of great scale, specifically to the climate crisis, and to safeguarding sustainable societies through a humane social climate. COP² was one outcome of that work—a global network aligned about converging growing activity and learning on climate-psychological resilience connections and putting them to global scale. An initial effort from that is to produce an implementation Roadmap for the UNFCCC Race to Resilience to incorporate the goal of building capacity to promote those supports to 4 billion people by 2030. Dr. Belkin is also the former Senior Deputy Commissioner in the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene where he led the Division of Mental Hygiene and its development and implementation of the innovative NYC-wide public mental health initiative, ThriveNYC. Before joining city government, he was Medical Director for Behavioral Health across the Health and Hospitals Corporation of the City of New York and served as Founding Editor in Chief of the open access journal Global Mental Health. As Director of the NYU Program in Global Mental Health, Dr. Belkin partnered with other groups globally to test and scale community-led models of mental health promotion and access in less resourced countries that are now widely used. A graduate of Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, where he also earned his undergraduate degree, Dr. Belkin earned his MPH at Harvard School of Public Health and a doctorate in the Department of the History of Science at Harvard University.

Abstract:

Mental health systems and policies need to be reframed to nurture social health and collective efficacy. How can we shift skills into the hands of community to build capacity, nurture wellbeing and inter-community accountability, and subsequently increase social cohesion, emotional wellness, participatory action, and communal learning needed to tackle the great problems facing us, especially the ever-accelerating reality of environmental collapse. There is a rich platform of experience and practice to build on to substantively pursue that aim. This presentation will review some of that platform, and especially argues that heading in these directions ultimately underscores the need to re-think the purposes of democracy.

Learning Objectives:

1. Summarize the evidence base behind novel approaches to community mental health.
2. Outline the processes by which wellbeing science and Global Mental Health innovation advances multiple social outcomes and democratic practice.
3. Discuss the implications of psychological resilience to address climate change and climate change psychological impacts.

References: