

Dr. Judy Kuriansky: A Visionary Leader in Psychology and Global Advocacy

Dr. Judy Kuriansky is a globally recognized clinical psychologist, educator, author, humanitarian, and leader in applied psychology. Her illustrious career spans decades, bridging academia, humanitarian outreach, advocacy, and media. She has been a professor in the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology adjunct faculty at Columbia University Teachers College in the United States for 22 years where she has mentored and inspired students to achieve their goals, and been a model for making a difference in the world.



On January 21, 2025, in Washington D.C., Dr. Kuriansky received the prestigious U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award for "lifelong commitment to building a stronger nation through volunteer service". This honor reflects her tireless dedication to advancing mental health, supporting communities in crisis, and fostering global well-being. This adds to her many other acknowledgments including being named as Grand Commander of the Order of the Rokel bestowed by the President of Sierra Leone, a Lifetime Achievement Award for Media Psychology and Technology and the IAAP award for Distinguished Professional Achievement.

Beyond her academic and humanitarian work, Dr. Kuriansky has had a profound impact through her leadership in the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), where she has played a key role over decades in advancing the global presence of applied psychology worldwide and especially at the United Nations.

Leadership at the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP)

As an IAAP NGO Representative to the United Nations, Dr. Kuriansky has been instrumental in integrating mental health into global policy discussions. Her dedication to ensuring that mental health is recognized as a core component of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has led to meaningful change at the highest levels of international governance.

Through her dedicated and tireless advocacy, she has elevated mental health and wellbeing as a critical global issue, working closely with UN ambassadors and international policymakers. She has also been a champion for youth mental health, making sure that young people's well-being is prioritized in policies that shape the future.

Dr. Kuriansky regularly organizes high-level panels, workshops, and events, co-sponsored by IAAP with other important partners, that bring together policymakers, mental health professionals, and NGOs to address wide-ranging pressing issues. These address disaster

recovery, the mental health impacts of climate change and environmental protection, empowerment of women and girls, education for all, peace and security, and the rights and resilience of vulnerable populations, including for UN fora like the Commission on the Status of Women, World Interfaith Harmony Week, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Her ability to build partnerships between IAAP and international stakeholders and agencies has been key to bridging academic research with real-world applications.



A defining aspect of her advocacy is her commitment to amplifying the voices of youth as well as women and marginalized and underserved communities. Her work is underscored by a belief that mental health is not just an individual concern but a universal issue deeply connected to economic, social, and environmental well-being.

A Lifelong Commitment to Service

Dr. Kuriansky's career has been marked by an unwavering dedication to humanitarian work. She has provided psychosocial support and trainings in response to some of the world's most devastating crises, including the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and COVID-19 in the Congo, school shootings, natural disasters in the U.S., Australia, Haiti, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, China and Iran, and for Syrian refugee children in Jordan. Always working with colleagues on the ground, her many collaborative projects include a girls' empowerment camp in Africa, and most recently, with a rehabilitation center in the war-ravaged Ukraine. Her ability to offer culturally sensitive and evidence-based interventions has made her a trusted figure in global disaster relief efforts.

Her leadership in innovative projects that promote resilience and peace include the "Global Kids Connect Project" that uses music, storytelling, and art to help children in conflict zones process trauma and develop emotional strength. Likewise, her "Stand Up for Peace Project" brings people together from all ages and diverse backgrounds to foster understanding and collaboration through creative expression.

Always contributing to cutting-edge issues and “Building Bridges Across Boundaries,” she was co-chair of the United Arab Emirates’ Global Council on Health, co-drafted the first policy on mental health and climate change, and serves on the boards of the United African Congress and the eMental Health International Collaborative. Her diverse efforts in all these areas are documented in many academic publications and books from psychological perspectives, including two volumes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and recently published topical anthologies about migration and about resilient health through innovative technology in the ongoing COVID-19 recovery period.



Academic Contributions: Inspiring the Next Generation of Psychologists

As a professor at Columbia University’s Teachers College for over two decades, Dr. Kuriansky has shaped the careers of countless graduate students, providing them with the knowledge and tools to become psychologists, educators, and advocates. She emphasizes the integration of theory and practice, encouraging students to use psychological science to address real-world challenges. She takes pride in her students’ accomplishments from publishing in journals and books, to getting jobs at the UN, and has taken them with her around the world after worldwide disasters and to present at psychology conferences from Paris to Hanoi and Dubai.

Her research has explored a wide range of topics such as healthy relationships, crisis coping mechanisms, and the psychological effects of global events. She has published extensively, producing academic articles and self-help books that make psychological knowledge accessible to both professionals and the general public.



With youth and UN delegates at a UN event for the protection of women and girls

Advocacy at the United Nations: A Champion for Mental Health

Dr. Kuriansky has been a leading voice for mental health advocacy at the United Nations, both as a longtime NGO representative and more recently also for government as an advisor to the Mission of Sierra Leone to the UN and for six years as policy advisor to the Ambassador of Sierra Leone to the United States. She has played a critical role in ensuring that mental health and wellbeing remains a key consideration in global policy, particularly within the contexts of sustainable development, disaster recovery, digital health and UN resolutions.

Her advocacy has been transformative, highlighting the essential role mental health plays in broader economic, social, and environmental goals. By bringing together stakeholders from diverse sectors, she has helped create lasting dialogue and action that position mental health as a fundamental global priority.

Media and Public Engagement: Bringing Psychology to the World

Dr. Kuriansky's ability to connect with diverse audiences has been a hallmark of her career. As a journalist, broadcaster, and media personality, she has made psychological insights accessible to millions. Her television feature reporting, columns in media from the New York Daily News to the Singapore Straits Times and South China Morning Post, and her long-running radio advice show provided guidance on relationships, mental health, and personal growth, earning her a dedicated following.

Her written work, spanning both academic and self-help genres, has been translated into multiple languages and is widely used by individuals, educators, and organizations around the world. More recently, she has embraced digital media, using webinars and podcasts to reach broader audiences and provide valuable insights on resilience, stress management, trauma recovery, and interpersonal and international relations.

The U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteer Service: A Testament to Her Impact

Dr. Kuriansky's receipt of the U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteer Service on January 21, 2025, is a fitting recognition of her extraordinary contributions to society. This award honors individuals who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to volunteerism and community service, qualities that define Dr. Kuriansky's life and work.



In her acceptance speech, she reflected on the power of collective action, emphasizing that this recognition is a testament to the many individuals she has had the privilege to work alongside. She underscored the importance of compassion and collaboration in creating a world where mental health and wellbeing is valued and protected for all.

A Legacy of Inspiration and Service

Dr. Judy Kuriansky's career is a testament to the transformative power of psychology. Through her leadership in IAAP, her teaching at Columbia University Teachers College, advocacy at the UN, humanitarian work around the world, innumerable research projects and publications, and her award-winning media roles, she has made an indelible impact on countless lives.

This recent recognition with the U.S. President's Award is yet another milestone in a lifelong commitment to service. As she continues to inspire and lead, Dr. Kuriansky remains a beacon of hope, resilience, and compassion - an example of how psychology can be an invaluable approach to build a better world.

IAAP is honored to count Dr. Kuriansky as a key member for decades. Her contributions exemplify the profound impact applied psychology can have on individuals and societies.