

Coffee Break with IAGP President Heloisa Fleury

YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS'
SECTION

NİLÜFER DEMİRHAN



50 years and beyond
group competency for
a world in conflict

Dear President Heloisa, thank you very much for your time for this interview. I know that you are working very hard, and you are very busy with the projects of IAGP. You have completed 1,5 years in your president role, I would like to ask you generally how are you and how do you feel about these years?

I have served IAGP and other organizations in many positions, and when I was elected President, I was aware of all aspects of the role that awaited me: few good moments of joy and satisfaction, as well as challenging and, sometimes, difficult situations. The sense of accomplishment that comes from overcoming these challenges is the most rewarding, especially when planning new projects aligned with the full potential of IAGP.

We are experiencing difficult times in the world e.g., post-COVID, wars, earthquakes, economic crisis, and these situations are also affecting our members and the IAGP. Which process do you think IAGP is going through in these years? What did you observe as president in IAGP in this period?

These challenging times are impacting all of us at varying degrees. The post-pandemic era appears to have heightened awareness and concern for the interconnection of global challenges.

Within the IAGP community, members seem more attuned to issues of social justice, possibly reflecting a broader trend in society where people seek a fair and equitable response to challenges faced by communities worldwide. IAGP is making all efforts to align its priorities with the needs of our members in response to these global challenges.

However, with the escalation of social demands, this approach has introduced new challenges for the organization. There is an increasing need to professionalize administrative services to deliver more substantial benefits for members and affiliated organizations. Initiatives such as courses, workshops, webinars, occasional in-person training, and updates to the website and communication systems represent new projects with considerable associated costs. IAGP requires more financial resources to professionalize administrative work and to face new developments.

What kind of progress direction is the current board following? What do you think that our board and the upcoming new board members should focus on for the future growth and progress of IAGP? How can our members also contribute to realize it?

The main directions include the development of group theory and practice, a commitment to expanding global reach, and the improvement of our administrative resources. IAGP's mission is achieved by supporting technological advancements, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, advocating evidence-based practice, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, expanding global outreach, and investing in future generations. Detailed strategic plans for these goals have been presented in the Annual Report 2022-2023 (available on the website).



IAGP President

Heloisa Fleury, Brazil

Her first encounter with IAGP was in 1997

Heloisa Fleury is the President of the International Association for Group Psychotherapy & Group Processes (IAGP) Psychologist in private practice, São Paulo, Brazil

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IAGP Fellowship Award

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However, the future requires continuous reassessment of these directions, outlining short and long-term goals for the organization. The evaluation criteria should prioritize the evolution of members' needs and expectations, as well as potential members and the population reached by our initiatives.

Even though we are aware that members could bring new ideas and projects, we haven't yet reached the level of participation we envision. We are actively seeking new and more efficient communication channels with members and affiliated organizations through surveys to understand their needs, concerns, and suggestions.

IAGP completed a half century. For an international association, it is a very big accomplishment. If you imagine the 80th or 100th years of IAGP, what do you wish to see? Maybe our future members would read this interview in the archives, what message would you like to give them?

The IAGP 50th Anniversary was a significant milestone for the entire IAGP community, providing an opportunity to reflect on the legacy left by pioneers, former IAGP Presidents and Board members, and to envision the resources we have for the future.



With the new generation
of group workers

I hope to witness the growing application of principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within IAGP, promoting greater global participation, openness to diverse concepts related to groups, and increased visibility for the creativity and innovative approaches to group work developed by our members worldwide.

Looking towards the 80th and 100th anniversaries, I hope that humanity has benefited from our dedication, and a new generation of IAGP members has played a crucial role using groups as the main tool for social development. IAGP educational and supportive initiatives, the growing network in our field, and the consultative position to the United Nations, to be approved in the near future, will be part of the legacy that this Board will offer to the progress of IAGP in the next 50 years. I hope that in the coming decades, IAGP will celebrate the results of our efforts, taking the position of an international representative of professionals and organizations specialized in group interventions, an essential resource for the sensitization, organization, and development of groups and communities.

My message to IAGP members in 2074 is: even after 50 years, I am confident that groups remain the main resource for the healthy development of humanity, as human nature thrives on connection, affection, and a sense of belonging - elements nurtured within groups led by professionals trained for this purpose. I hope you are harvesting the fruits left by us and are well prepared to identify new directions for our organization. Half a century ago, we tried to professionalize and open IAGP to the diverse demands from around the world, and I hope that you can identify new paths driven by the needs of a society that might be much different from what we know today.



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If we talk on a more personal level, can you tell us how was your first encounter with IAGP? How long have you been a member of IAGP?

My first encounter with IAGP took place in 1997 when José Fonseca introduced IAGP at the Brazilian Psychodrama Congress and invited Febrap, the Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama, as well as psychodramatists, to join IAGP. At that time, I held the position of Febrap treasurer and actively contributed to this objective. With Febrap's support, Fonseca invited colleagues from other theoretical approaches to collaborate in organizing a preparatory conference for a Regional Congress of IAGP. Later, as Febrap President, along with Marlene Marra, the former President and chair of the Local Organizer Committee, we established an institutional committee with Brazilian professionals from various theoretical approaches, which played a crucial role in organizing the 16th IAGP International Congress in São Paulo in 2006. I have been working for IAGP for the past 25 years in different positions, as a Member, Board Member, chair of the Transcultural Section, Treasurer twice, and now as President!

In all these years in IAGP, what kept you motivated to be a member of IAGP?

I feel a mission to improve the visibility of Latin American knowledge about group work. I have attended international and regional conferences

with the goal of fostering knowledge exchange, learning from others, but also sharing our advancements in theory and practice. Latin America faces unique social challenges, and in response, we have adapted theories and practices to align with our local culture. I believe that the experiences from Brazil and Latin America are a valuable resource for other cultures facing similar challenges. Also, the insights gained from the experiences of other developing nations can enrich our own practices. The exchange of experiences can contribute to a practice increasingly attuned to the social demands, which are undergoing profound transformations.

During these 25 years as an IAGP Member, you have served in several positions until 2012 and joined again the Board in 2022. How was this 10 years period?

After stepping down from the Board in 2012 with the honorary title of Fellow of IAGP, I was invited to serve as the Editor-in-chief of the Brazilian Journal of Psychodrama, with the mission to elevate the scientific status of the journal for indexing in Scielo, the best database in Latin America. It was a learning experience in scientific publishing and also an opportunity to look for articles from authors across different regions in Brazil and other countries, giving visibility to the diversity of theoretical tendencies. My career in scientific publishing was fulfilling, reaching the successful indexing of the journal on the Scielo database. Later, I was invited to join the Board (later serving as co-editor) of the Springer Nature Series Psychodrama in Counselling, Coaching, and Education, and I co-edited the book "Psychodrama in Brazil" in 2022. Also, I was elected as a member of the Deliberative Council and now Treasurer for the Brazilian Association of Scientific Editors (ABEC).



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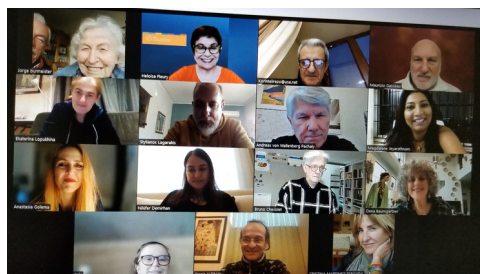
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Board meeting with Grete Leutz and Jorge Burmeister

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In 2022, Richard Beck invited me to join the Executive Management Group (EMG) in the position of Treasurer. I am very grateful to him, as this opportunity brought a new connection with the IAGP Board. Joining the IAGP Professional Writing Group was a pleasure, where I shared my enthusiasm for writing articles and engaging in scientific publishing. In the role of IAGP Treasurer, I started to be more and more involved with the management of IAGP projects, fostering my desire to aspire to the presidency.

Which theoretical approach is your primary one? Why do you feel closer to this approach?

My main professional activity has been in private practice in São Paulo since the beginning of my career, when I explored various therapeutic modalities, including six years of Psychoanalysis, with four sessions per week. With time, it became clear that my primary approach was Psychodrama. I felt closer to psychodrama through personal experience and more than two decades as group supervisor at the Medical School of the University of São Paulo with leaders from diverse theoretical backgrounds. It was public health with patients from vulnerable segments of Brazilian society, and it was clear that psychodramatic group work was the best resource to help them connect with themselves.

How long have you been practicing as a psychodramatist? How was your first encounter with psychodrama? What led you to pursue an interest in psychodrama?

Many years ago, during a group psychotherapy session, I became the protagonist in a scene with my mother, my newborn sister, and myself (2 years old!).

The experience was so vivid, so moving that I decided to become a psychodramatist. During my training, I had the opportunity to attend a 10-day training program in Beacon with Zerka Moreno, and she directed an incredible session in which I was the protagonist. Although I was still in the early stages of my training, I noticed many differences between psychodrama in the USA and Brazil, which stimulated my curiosity to explore this approach in other cultures.

If you were to switch roles with the IAGP, what would you say to its president, Heloisa?

Stay enthusiastic and attuned to the Board and Members to accomplish all your plans in these remaining 18 months!

What is your suggestion or message for young professionals?

Embrace every opportunity for learning and growth, aware that the early stages of your career lay the foundation for the experience you will cultivate throughout your professional life, and actively seek diverse experiences to gain understanding and respect for the sociocultural differences among the individuals and groups you may serve – an essential condition for aligning with diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in your work. Don't be afraid of challenges because they will always play an important role in your personal and professional development, face them as opportunities for growth. Build a network, both within and outside your field of work, as collaboration often stimulates innovation, maintaining curiosity and commitment to your work because your career is just beginning.

What is your message to all the IAGP members?

I am very honored to invite you to continue building on the rich legacy of our organization, promoting an inclusive environment where many perspectives can flourish, working collaboratively for our shared mission, keeping in mind that your active participation and support are very important for IAGP. The Board and other collaborators work as volunteers, but to enhance our organization and its impact, we need your membership to sustain the organization, ensuring that IAGP can continue its work for social justice and provide valuable resources and opportunities for its members and, consequently, for the society. Thank you for your dedication, and please, keep the enthusiasm and attunement with our community for these remaining 18 months and later for our shared future!

I am pleased to express my gratitude to Nilüfer Demirhan for her wise questions, which have led me on a journey to the past, helping me make sense of my enthusiasm for the future. My thanks go to my friends at the EMG, the Board, and other collaborators within the broader IAGP membership for their support during the good and challenging moments.



With Japanese colleagues,
Preparations for International Conference
in Japan in 2025