NJPA Acceptance Statement

Stanley Moldawsky Mentor Award
Jeffrey S. Kahn, Ph.D.

I feel very grateful to many people and institutions who have made it possible for me to receive this honor. First, to NJPA which bestowed this honor upon me. I have been a member for over thirty years and had the privilege to serve on the Executive Board. Second, to the late Dr. Stanley Moldawsky, who was a role model for me for his long history of mentoring psychologists and for his enormous contributions to the profession of psychology. Third, to the late Dr. Edward Aronow who was a mentor to me and supervised me for my New Jersey license in psychology.

I am also very grateful to Dr. Alison Johnson, who was the first person I supervised for licensure and who became a friend, a colleague, and my partner in growing Summit Psychological Services into the large group practice that it became, providing comprehensive psychological services and helping thousands of people over the years. In addition to being the co-leader of our Recovery Therapy Group for 25 years, she too has become a mentor for many psychologists.

Also essential to making SPS a positive institution in the community was Rona Seegman, our Director of Administration, who helped us launch SPS and has been our business professional over all these years.

Finally, I want to thank my wonderful colleagues who have been part of the clinical team and who have provided skilled and
compassionate professional services, helping, healing, and fostering growth.

While the spiritual teachings of the Mishnah instruct all people to contribute to healing the world, I feel privileged to be a psychologist, whose daily work is to do this, one individual, couple, family, or group at a time. The kindness and compassion which are part of this healing are also elements of the mindfulness tradition, which emphasizes the cultivation of these qualities as well as the wisdom that allows us facilitate the growth of our clients. The Buddha’s only goal was to reduce suffering and increase happiness and wellbeing. (Do these sound like familiar goals?)

Mentoring psychologists and supervising them for licensure is an act of kindness. It is not easy to become a licensed psychologist in New Jersey. Supervising psychologists for their licensure has been an enormously rich experience -- working with many bright people with diverse backgrounds and therapeutic training; learning together from their therapy experience and our supervision relationship; and sharing in their happiness upon becoming licensed. The work of mentoring also ultimately contributes to the healing of the clients they will serve. It also influences my own emotional wellbeing because when you perform acts of kindness for others, you feel positive emotion.

Finally, I feel fortunate that one of my specialties is treating addictions, including nicotine addiction. We are all aware of the opioid epidemic which is currently taking 80,000 lives a year. Another way that my helping is multiplied is that recovering addicts and alcoholics who work a 12 step program, follow the 12th step instruction to help other addicted people who still suffer. Cigarette smoking kills close to
500,000 Americans a year. Half of the people who start smoking as adolescents and never stop, die from the addiction. Knowing that I have helped hundreds of people find recovery produces the wonderful awareness that I have saved many lives. Psychologists who have helped clients with life-threatening psychological disorders should know this too.

The Talmud states that one who saves a single life has done something that is as if they had saved the whole world.

May all my colleagues, may all of my fellow psychologists, may all people find health, strength, happiness, and peace.