

Learning to cope in hard times

By Don Robbins
Staff Writer

Since Hawaii's economic downturn began, Sunny Maesad, has been hearing concerns from clients and students that they are suffering from insomnia, fear, and anxiety about the future.



Sunny Maesad, Ph.D., will provide workshops on the subject of "Coping Skills for Trying Times."

"During these tough economic times, anxieties are high and people need new coping skills," said Maesad, who has a doctorate in psychology.

Kalihi resident Maesad serves as president and founder of the Hawaii Wellness Institute, a nonprofit organization whose mission she said is "dedicated to inspiring people and transforming lives." She is providing free workshops on the subject of "Coping Skills for Trying Times" to local organizations who need a morale boost but cannot afford to hire a speaker.

Subjects will include: emotional survival, controlling insomnia and anxiety, compassionate management of your personal and professional life, expanding your comfort zone, and turning apathy into action.

"I will help wherever I am needed most," she said. If an organization could afford to make a donation to the Hawaii Wellness Institute for her services, she would be grateful for whatever they could afford to give, certified hypnotherapist Maesad said.

Specializing in stress-related conflicts, Maesad explained that she's a proponent of meditation and teaching people how to stay grounded and centered when their mind is stuck in anxiety. People are in charge of only two things: their own behavior and their own attitude, she said.

In addition to her offer to organizations, Maesad is also offering five free Monday night workshops to the public in a series on the same subject at the ING Direct Cafe in Waikiki beginning Feb. 2. The ING Direct Cafe is located at 1958 Kalakaua Blvd.

The workshops are from Feb. 2 to March 2 at 5:30 p.m. They include "Emotional Survival 101" on Feb. 2; "Control Anxiety and Insomnia" on Feb. 9; "Compassionately Manage Your Life," on Feb. 16; "Expand Your Comfort Zone," on Feb. 23; and "Turn Apathy into Action" on March 2.

Motivational support groups will follow each lecture from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for \$25. Three-day advance registration is required.

Maesad also works in private practice as a wellness counselor. According to Maesad, her interest in helping others stems back into her own childhood. She explained that her mother, grandmother and aunt suffered from bi-polar mental illness and had been treated for clinical depression. "I was scared as a young girl and I wanted to learn the tools to keep me from slipping that way," Maesad said.

She studied psychology and meditation in an effort to keep herself in balance. "I hold a great treasure and solution to mental anguish, and I feel compelled to share it," Maesad said.

Members of today's society also suffer from "techno-stress," from the constant use of computers, e-mail and texting, which have placed a great demand on the psyche, she said.

Maesad also pointed to the country's obesity epidemic and a lack of physical activity as a cause of additional stress. "The number one best solution for depression is 40 minutes of aerobic activity," she said.

For more information, call the Hawaii Wellness Institute at 848-5544 or register online at www.hawaiiwellnessinstitute.org