

## Feeling traumatized? Gloucester author has book for you

**By Joann Mackenzie**

» Staff Writer

Trauma, as many Americans discovering this post-election week, comes in all shapes and sizes.

And here in Gloucester, not many know more about dealing with trauma than Rocky Neck's Karen Gross.

A former president of Southern Vermont University, Gross served as senior policy advisor to the U.S. Department of Education in the Obama administration. She is a lawyer, an artist, a public speaker, and a prolific writer with some 11 books to her credit.

Gross's latest work, "Mending Education: Finding Hope, Creativity, and Mental Wellness in Times of Trauma," was co-authored with Ed K.S. Wang, assistant professor of psychology in the department of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Although it was written for educators and policy discussion, it has some very down-to-earth advice to offer everyone, particularly, at the moment, those left stunned by the Nov. 5 election.

Gross and Wang were together at Rocky Neck's Salted Cod Gallery in late October to launch their heftily titled book.

The book arrives at time, Gross said, when a divided America is experiencing a collective trauma unlike anything the nation has experienced before.

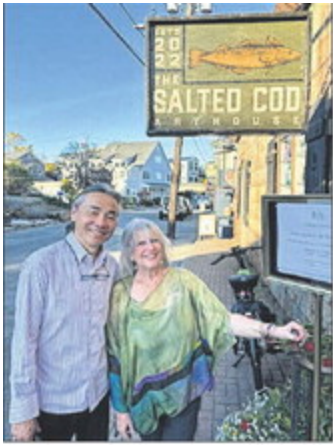
Gross — who was teaching a class eight blocks from the World Trade Towers on the morning of 9/11 — said she's gravitated toward trauma as a focus of her work because trauma, in one form or another, is a part of life, like the seasons. So just as you'd prepare for a frigid winter with warm clothing, you should prepare yourself for trauma.

Here in the Northeast, there are signs of educators

doing that with the last election after Tuesday's voting. At New York City's prestigious Fieldston School, and Boston's Berklee Music School, students were given the option of skipping Wednesday's classes if they felt too traumatized. Likewise, Boston's Isabella Gardner Museum was one of several museums countering post-election trauma by offering free admission to their soul-soothing galleries.

Gross herself did something like that when the COVID 19 pandemic made its terrifying way to our

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**Karen Gross, right, co-authored her latest book, “Mending Education: Finding Hope, Creativity, and Mental Wellness in Times of Trauma,” with Ed K.S. Wang, left, assistant professor of psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. JOANN MACKENZIE/**

Staff photo

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## Author

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shores, retreating to the natural beauty of Rocky Neck as a spiritual antidote to the darkness of the time.

It was, she said, something of an awakening, sparking original thinking and ideas, including in initiating a “virtual teachers lounge” in which teachers — deprived of the connections forged in actual teachers lounge — communicated via a Zoom link, achieving continuity and community.

That sojourn gave birth to the book and to her collaboration with Wang.

“Mending Education” completes a trilogy of books, the first of which, “Breakaway Learners” was followed by “Trauma Doesn’t Stop at the School Door” It came in response to the trauma of the pandemic and includes an epilogue that is a conversation between the authors based on a set of questions, allowing them to share their thoughts and feelings about the book and its positive messages.

It is not just a guide, but an instruction manual

on how to turn trauma into a tool that can be used not just in the classroom, but the classroom of life. It is in parts scholarly, but human experience shines through in the voices of the many educators who share their stories and insights.

Gross, who has shown her art in local Cape Ann galleries, likes to use art to illustrate her approach to trauma.

“I give a student a sheet of paper. Then I instruct them to rip it to shreds,” she said. “That’s trauma for the paper. Then I tell them to take the shreds and make with them a piece of art. You’d be amazed what can be made.”

More information, including a complete schedule of author events and readings, may be found at <https://karengrosseducation.com/>.

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