

THE PROBLEM OF RETRAUMATIZATION OF UKRAINIANS DURING THE WAR ANNIVERSARY

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One of the most common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder is retraumatization, also known as secondary traumatic stress. Retraumatization became especially relevant for Ukrainians on the anniversary of the full-scale invasion, when there were many videos and photos of last year's events on the Internet and memories of the psychological shock of the first days, feelings of panic and hopelessness were especially acute. There is a so-called anniversary syndrome, which manifests itself in sleep problems, weakness, irritability, eating disorders, panic attacks, lack of strength and energy. According to the definition of experts, retraumatization is the opening of old emotional wounds and the anxious anticipation of this process. Retraumatization can be even more severe than the primary trauma, because it does not simply consist of a time-limited painful experience that has begun and ended, but of a feeling of endless agonizing and meaningless tension [1]. Retraumatization affects not only individuals, but the entire society. It is very widespread among Ukrainians, especially among those who lived in the east of the country and once fled their homes because of the war. Constant stress exhausts Ukrainians materially, physically, and psychologically, and people lose their internal resources, and the question of how to replenish them becomes more and more urgent with each passing day of the war.

The purpose of our study was to identify the main triggers of retraumatization, including the constant need to retell one's story; lack of emotional and/or physical safety; labeling (victim, refugee); the presence of accusations and stigmatization; and the lack of opportunity to process and treat trauma.

We conducted a survey involving 38 people aged 17 to 45. 63.2 % of them are living abroad as refugees and 36.8 % - in Ukraine. The analysis of their responses revealed that people who have been in the occupation and combat zone are most affected by retraumatization (73.7 %), of whom 66.7 % experience anxiety about their experiences from time to time (for example, when they hear loud noises or find things related to their traumatic past); 30 % almost never remember their experiences; 3.3 % are constantly in a state of anxiety. At the same time, 89.5 % say they experience emotional and psychological stress as a result of the war. At the same time, 94.7 % of respondents have not sought professional help, which may contribute to retraumatization; 5.3 % have sought help, but do not notice any significant changes in their condition. 76.3 % of respondents affirmed that they filter the news and other information related to the hostilities to avoid psychological stress.

Thus, it was found that a significant number of respondents are in a state of retraumatization, but they are trying to overcome it, and most of them are doing it on their own. It is important to understand that recovery from trauma takes time and must take place on many levels - physical, emotional, and spiritual. The best option, of course, is to get help from specialists who can expertly assess the impact of traumatic events on the psyche, recognize the intensity of trauma and retraumatization, and provide effective psychological support. But at the same time, if people are unable to seek psychological help for various reasons, it is not difficult to find exercises or classes that can help restore emotional resources, maintain mental health, and reduce the impact of traumatic factors.

References:

1. Javidi, H., Yadollahie, M. (2012). Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. *Int J Occup Environ Med.* 2012 Jan; 3 (1):2-9. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23022845>.