

Focusing program

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The family (R.A) consists of 9 members; a father, a mother, (4) daughters, and(3) sons (some name initials and ages weren't mentioned upon the client's request).

The father (60yrs), the mother (55yrs), a son (A. 36yrs), a son (J. 30yrs), a daughter (D. 28yrs), a daughter (N. 24yrs), a daughter (H. 22yrs), a daughter (R. 19yrs), and a son (M. 8yrs). Their income level is extremely poor.

The family lives in western Gaza (the beach refugee's camp), a place that witnessed many resilience stories that came with painful success after extreme deprivation and challenging of sufferings.

The daughter (R.A) started talking saying: "my suffering began when I married young at the age of 14, I was a child who have just finished elementary school, and I started a new stage in my life that wasn't like the ones before. My husband was sterile, but not merciful, he used to target his anger for being sterile on my small body with violence and verbal abuse. All things and situations felt so different, my tears used to spill on my bruised face and my skinny body due to the continues beating and verbal abuse by my husband.

We lived through a very challenging life conditions, we lost our income source during the war of 2012, in which the blacksmith's shop that my husband worked at was destroyed. This increased the intensity of my husband's temper and violence, in addition, we lost our independent shelter, which forced us to go living at my mother in law's house, who laid all kinds of insults on me, and threatened me to get another wife for my husband because I had no children. On-going suffering for five years that were kept hidden from my family and everybody else, but I fought my helplessness and finished high school. My husband allowed me to finish it after great trouble, and I succeeded despite his continuous sarcasm. My life continued between the tied, until the main incident.

I still remember that awful night when my brother in law had a son, I woke up that night to the sound of my husband's weeping, I knew the reason and I felt sorry for him and us. I didn't realize that the petty looks that we have nothing to do except praying to god would turn into extreme violence, punches, and blood scattered everywhere. I begged my husband for mercy, but his rage was stronger than my words, I ran away and begged the neighbours for their help, and I lost consciousness. I woke up to the sound of my parents next to me, I clung to my father in horror that my torture would continue again. My breath and words were so fast, telling my father "I don't want him dad, take me with you please, my head and body are exhausted from all that beating". My parents picture was so blurred in my swelling eyes, but I glanced anger mixed with tears and shock for keeping all this misery a secret from them, that was the last scene, afterwards I only woke up in the hospital. My parents were sitting next to me, shocked by the weakness in my body and personality, I was their strong talkative sweetheart. With stumbled words and slow breaths I told them that I choose to accept my destiny hoping for better days, that my husband would change with time, but he didn't.

After staying at the hospital for two days, I have noticed the absence of my father, I wept to my mother saying: "where is my dad, I am his sweetheart who doesn't get mad from, I won't hide anything from him anymore, please let me see him". I started getting better, but my pain increased when my father had a stroke because of his deep sadness. I felt so guilty and said "I killed myself in life, and I killed my father". My mother was comforting me saying: "this is a test from god, pray more so maybe god would make things better". I was discharged from the hospital after a while.

We set together at home, my father told me "you are my princess as you have always been, this is your happy home, go back to the way you were with your life and laughter, we are all here beside you". I cried so hard, my father is my supporter, but I feel broken now, I felt like I had nobody to support me, his words awakened the sadness inside of me, and the fear of the stigma as being divorced. At that moment, I felt pity for myself and my mother.

The daughter (R.A) participated in the focusing sessions, delivered at the women's activation centre by the facilitator Ghada Redwan from Palestine trauma centre during the period (21/01/2017 - 29/05/2017). She received twelve weekly sessions. The

sessions helped in altering her self-image, from being a broken divorced woman to a searcher for hope. She became able to accept her feelings and her experience, and to embrace those feelings to become closer to herself and her family.

Results of working with the participant:

- Throughout the focusing sessions, the participant (R.A) was able to recall the feelings of pain from the continuous abuse laid on her by her husband, she said: “I recalled confused feelings toward my husband, at times I hated him, and other times I hated myself and felt pity for him for not being able to have children. Sometimes I see myself as a victim who got attached to her offender, but throughout the focusing sessions, my feelings became clearer and I started to listen to my feelings’ inner wisdom that it was an experience and it ended, I overcame this pain and I can look for my dreams and hopes again”.
- The focusing sessions helped the participant in overcoming the stigma crisis of being divorced by recalling positive feelings regarding her being in a family that respect, love, and appreciates her. This helped her compensate by being proud of herself and her accomplishments, she became capable of communicating and partitioning of her sad memories and negative feelings, she said: “I was vulnerable, but I regained my power and my ability to search for a new hope”.
- The group focusing sessions helped the participant in finding psychological resilience through listening to others’ experiences, and she made new friendships. In addition, the participant was taught to use some skills and techniques that could alleviate the intensity of her psychological pressures, through using; distance technique, communicating and partitioning of negative feelings, and sharing the skills with her family. Sharing the focusing skills with other participants and her family helped in creating a good atmosphere at home, which helps in replacing spare times with active times that increased the intimacy among the familial relationships. The participant (R.A) said: “I used to drown in my thoughts, feelings, and secrets, but now, especially after the dry and green stick’s exercise, I see myself as a green stick and I will always be that way”.

- In order to extend the effects of the focusing sessions on the long run, the participant (R.A) played the role of the facilitator within her family and her surrounding environment, she communicates with the facilitator Ghada Redwan from PTC to implement successful focusing sessions in active listening and support, through repeating the focusing skills for her periodically. This helped the family in creating new atmosphere at home as mentioned earlier.
- At the end of the sessions, the participant (R.A) gave her many thanks and appreciation to the facilitator Ghada, for making an intervention to help her in understanding her feelings and in communicating and coping with them, she said: “Now I am actually released of my sadness and pain, I got engaged to my cousin and I hope he will compensate me for my past with happiness and joy. I go to the university now to obtain a degree. This is the hope for always being a green stick, and I shall always be”. At last, the participant hoped that the focusing services could reach all families to reinforce their psychological and social resilience.
- The participant was informed with the Centre’s contact numbers in case she needed any further help in the future.

Report writer

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