

Success Story: Case Study

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Code: GF17.P297 (M.R)

The family of (M.R) consists of 6 members; a father, a mother, and 4 sons. The father (M. 30yrs), the mother (A. 28yrs), a son (S. 7yrs), a son (H. 5yrs), a son (G. 3yrs), and a son (M. 4months).

The family currently lives in a rental apartment in Gaza city, they moved there along with the grandparents, uncles, and aunts after the complete destruction of their house at Alshejaya area during the last war of 2014 on the Gaza strip, that area was a burning flame that destroyed everything, the Israeli army was not merciful in that area neither to trees nor stones.

The family (M.R) suffer from a terrible economic conditions after losing all of their belongings during the last war of 2014. The father ,a policeman, supports his 6 members family with his limited income, and they live in one room with their extended family inside one apartment.

Since the family lived in a border area, the first defense line during the past three wars, they couldn't avoid the repeated harm and traumas from everywhere, the major traumas this family have faced were:

- The first trauma was during the war of 2008, living in fear and anxiety worrying for their fate.
- During the war of 2012, the house was partly damaged, and the family lived in deep fear, displacement, and insecurity.
- The toughest trauma was during the war of 2014, when the family was scattered and displaced after the complete destruction of their house.
- The mother (A) and the son (H) were severely injured when the house they were displaced at, after the destruction of their own house, was bombed by the Israeli army.

Living through all these repeated traumas and increasing its intensity induced a state of anxiety, fatigue, and stress, which made the family suffer from many psychological symptoms that enforce a huge pressure on them.

The mother was the most exposed and affected member of the traumas, she was unable to cope, and the sudden death of her father out of cancer increased the effect of her traumas, this was very hard on her and made her fall in depression. In addition, the terrible living, economic, and social conditions increased the psycho-social pressure on her, in which they live on budget with a limited income, and being suffocated by the lack of independency and privacy while living in one room along with her extended family. Also, the continuous interference and bothering made by the husband's family; especially the grandfather who is dominant and takes his sons' salary because he lives under his roof, have caused troubles in-between them and threatened the relationship between the father and the mother. Considering that the father has a weak personality and no control over his family.

All these traumas, sufferings, and social and economic pressures have led to many psychological symptoms represented by (Anxiety, stress, nervousness, repeated crying, over protection of the children, avoidance, sleep difficulties, and guilt).

The mother (A) complaint: while crying the mother said: “ I am so tired of my life, I feel everyone hates me; wars, displacement, the death of my father, and me and my children being injured. I don't stability, I just try to make the days pass by, I am so tired and nervous that my children fear me. I can't sleep and I feel terrified by any loud sounds. My children have to be always around, I hate to let them go out).

The family therapy project's team, funded by INTERPAL-UK, (Psychiatric, psychologist, social worker, and activator) visited the family to provide them with therapy and psychosocial support. Through applying a pre assessment, the team noticed that the family members suffer from fatigue and tiredness due to the traumas that they have been through, and the mother's (A) symptoms ((Anxiety, stress, nervousness, repeated crying, over protection of the children, avoidance, sleep difficulties, and guilt) were diagnosed to be post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD, while the other family members were diagnosed to suffer from psychological anxiety.

The family received 12 therapeutic and psychosocial educational sessions to overcome the traumas and sufferings that they have been through during the past three wars on the Gaza Strip. The sessions varied between group and individual session during the period (22/02/2017-13/06/2017).

The work team delivered sessions to identify the family tree and familial relations, and to identify the strengths and weaknesses sources for the family. Safe place session, a focusing technique, was also delivered to make the family feel calm and comfortable, in addition to the relaxation exercise. Play therapy was applied with the children in order to involve the mother with them while playing, this would reinforce and strengthen the mother's relationship with her children. In addition to delivering the behavioral activation exercise, which aims to provide the family with a certain time to do some exercises that could provide a quality time between them.

Individual intervention was also provided with the mother (A) such as; active listening exercise where she was given a space to debrief the sufferings and traumas that caused her constant anxiety. Psychological education was given to the mother regarding pressures, traumas, symptoms, effects on children and adults, ways of coping, and the importance of familial support to face them. The dialogue with symptoms exercise was applied to educate the mother about the nature of her symptoms, and to reinforce her ability to understand it and deal with it in a positive way. Psychological resilience exercise, a focusing technique, was applied to reinforce her psychological resilience, and her ability to confront life pressures and cope with the surrounding conditions, in addition to the positive reinforcement of the mothers personality and her personal qualities.

Top results of working with the family for four months:

- The family found psychological stability, they became able to positively cope with the surrounding conditions. This reflected positively on their familial relationships, in which the children became more close to their mother, and they felt comfortable to sit with her after being afraid to come near her before because of her excessive nervousness.
- The mother became more understanding of her husband's weak personality, and she avoids situations that cause conflicts between them.
- The mother's relationship with her husband's family improved, now there is more understanding and bonding between them, she gives them help in doing life tasks and they treat her like a family member now.

- The grandfather specifies a certain amount of money for the family to cover their liabilities, this alleviated the family's burdens and financial debts and increased their feeling of comfort and safety.
- The mother's psychological symptoms improved a lot, she became more resilient, she can handle her symptoms in a positive way, she became calmer and allows her children to go outside alone, she became able to have good sleep, and she is convinced that what she suffered from before was her destiny not her fault. This made her feel stronger and improved her relationship with all family members.
- **The mother (A) said :** “ I have never imagined that my life could ever change, I was always sad and I felt like everyone was against me, but after the sessions, I became much better, I am calmer and more patient with my children, I sit and play with them, I teach them, and I allow them to go play outside. My relationship with my husband is better now, because I became more understanding of his personality, and I try to avoid the things that irritates him. Thank God for that my relationship with my husband's family is good now”.

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