

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREVENTION OF FAMILY BURNOUT: NARRATIVE PRACTICES

Психологічна профілактика сімейного вигорання: нарративні практики

У статті розглянуто типові причини сімейного вигорання: брак практик спільності; незбалансованість режимів індивідуальної і спільної праці –відпочинку; тиск гендерних стереотипів щодо прав і обов'язків жінок і чоловіків у сім'ї; низька толерантність до індивідуальної своєрідності шлюбного партнера. З'ясовано різні компоненти незадоволеності життям у чоловіків (спроби маніпулювання, контролювання, використання їхнього статусу; брак поваги та інтересу до їхніх особистісних властивостей, професійної самореалізації) та у жінок (самотність, брак розуміння і підтримки; комунікативні залежності; ігнорування чоловіком батьківських та побутових обов'язків). Визначено наступні практики профілактики сімейного вигорання: «практика перевтілення», «лего-практика», «практика створення спільного минулого», «практика зміни фокусу», «практика створення спільного майбутнього». Серед типів спільних сімейних нарративів (домінування-підпорядкування, автономія, злиття, кооперація, турбота) виділено практики кооперації та турботи як ефективні способи профілактики сімейного вигорання. Показано, яким чином застосування нарративних практик в процесі осмислення спільного життєвого досвіду покращує інтеграцію травматичних спогадів в більш цілісну особистісну історію кожного з членів подружжя і сім'ї в цілому.

Ключові слова: сімейне вигорання, практики спільності, незадоволеність життям, наратив, автобіографія, психологічна профілактика.

Психологическая профилактика семейного выгорания: нарративные практики

В статье рассмотрены типичные причины семейного выгорания: недостаточное количество практик совместности; несбалансированность режимов индивидуального и коллективного труда – отдыха; давление гендерных стереотипов относительно прав и обязанностей мужчин и женщин в семье; низкая толерантность к индивидуальному своеобразию брачного партнера. Определены компоненты неудовлетворенности жизнью у мужчин (попытки манипулировать, контролировать, использовать их статус; недостаток уважения и интереса к их личностным особенностям, профессиональной самореализации) и у женщин, внимания и поддержки (одиночество, недостаток понимания и поддержки; коммуникативные зависимости; игнорирование мужем родительских и бытовых обязанностей). Определены следующие практики профилактики семейного выгорания: «практика перевоплощения», «лего-практика», «практика создания общего прошлого», «практика смены фокуса», «практика создания общего будущего». Среди типов совместных семейных нарративов (доминирование-подчинение, автономия, слияние, кооперация, забота) выделены практики кооперации и заботы как эффективные способы профилактики семейного выгорания. Показано, каким образом использование нарративных практик в процессе осмысления совместного жизненного опыта способствует интеграции травматических переживаний в более целостную личностную историю каждого из членов семьи и всей семьи в целом.

Ключевые слова: семейное выгорание, практики совместности, неудовлетворенность жизнью, нарратив, автобиография, психологическая профилактика.

Psychological prevention of family burnout: narrative practices

The article considers the typical causes of family burnout: lack of commonality practices; imbalance of the regime of individual and collective labor - recreation; gender stereotypes pressure regarding the rights and responsibilities of women and men in the family; low tolerance to the individual peculiarity of the marriage partner. There are different components of dissatisfaction with own lives in men (attempts to manipulate, to control them, to use their status; lack of respect and interest for their personality traits; their professional self-realization) and in women (loneliness, lack of understanding, and support; communicative dependencies; husband's ignoring of parental and domestic responsibilities). The effective practices of preventing family burnout are defined: "impersonation practice", "lego-practice" "practice of common past creating" "practice of focus changing" "practices of common future creating". Among the types of common family narratives (domination-subordination, autonomy, confluence, cooperation, and care) only the practices of cooperation and care are the effective ways of preventing family burnout. It is shown how the application of narrative practices in the process of comprehension of the common life experience improves the integration of traumatic memories into a more coherent personal history of each member of the marriage particularly and the history of family in the whole.

Key words: family burnout, commonality practices, dissatisfaction with life, narrative, autobiography, psychological prevention.

Problem statement. Burnout is rather a long-term state of emotional exhaustion experienced by representatives of communicative professions as a result of the long-term inclusion in emotionally intense and significant situations of interaction between people. But a person is included in emotionally tense communicative situations not only at work. In fact, it is often even more depleted in the family, where it is also necessary to listen, understand, sympathize, help, advise, apologize, and support each other every day. Professional and family burnout are often reinforced. Especially if a person is dissatisfied with his/her personal, professional, financial prospects, if conflicts at work or in the family arise quite often. The experience of psychological counseling shows that the urgency of the family burnout study grows in the conditions of long-term military aggression. Therefore, there is the problem of finding the effective practices for the prevention of emotional exhaustion, which a person could use under the direction of a psychologist, and on his/her own.

Analysis of scientific research. The term "personal family burnout" was introduced to refer to the peculiar state of physical, emotional, psychic, communicative exhaustion that a person experiences in the family. Burnout arises as a result of long mutual misunderstanding, the lack of sympathy, dissatisfaction with the spouses' significant needs, stay in conflict interaction. The burnout state with emotional exhaustion, fatigue, irritation, indifference, loss of taste to life develops slowly, almost imperceptibly, but has significant negative consequences for both the person him/herself and for the family well-being. Everyday communication requires too much resources, excessive emotional investments [3].

The analysis of literature [4, 10, 11] shows that family problems often increase in wartime. W. Saltzman, P. Lester, W. Beardslee, Ch. Layne & others propose five primary risk mechanisms for military families and common negative "chain reaction" pathways through which they undermine the resilience of families contending with wartime deployments and parental

injury [10]. In order for children to undergo the extreme stressors of war and conflict a number of psychosocial interventions are oriented toward the family, with the aim of strengthening parent-child relationships and connection [4].

One of the interventions in such conditions is Narrative Exposure Therapy. The patient constructs a narration about his or her whole life from birth up to the present situation while focusing on the detailed exploration of the traumatic war experiences and traumatic memories [4]. The methods to help families are family narrative interaction [7], and Developing Shared Family Narratives [10, 5, 2, 1]. The members of the families share their experiences, reactions, fears, and ongoing concerns in order to craft collectively a family narrative to improve adaptation and resilience [10].

While developing practices for the family burnout prevention, the following must be taken into account. Paths of recovery are highly individual and heterogeneous [9]. There is consistent evidence for a negative association between burnout and empathy [13]. The search of the effective interventions in such conditions led us to attempts to use a joint narrative as a preventive practice, sensitive to the peculiarity of the burnout history of each family.

The purpose of the article is determining the causes of family burnout and study of prevention practices by creating different forms of joint narrative.

Presentation of the main material and research results. We consider the family narrative as a common history created by partners, open to the past and future. This biography in the process of dialogue integrates views on the life of a man and woman about family relationships, helps to rethink the acquired experience, acts as means of constructing such an important commonality as family.

The period from 2014 to 2018, when the author interviewed the clients, is the period of continuous military aggression against our country, which in many ways deepens family burnout. The content analysis of 27 therapeutic

interviews was conducted by the author. It showed that the main cause of family burnout is the lack of commonality practices. During wartime the combatants, their wives, parents, children, internally displaced persons partially lose their habitual practices of communication in the families.

People who are seeking for a psychotherapist with complaints of family burnout speak about the absence of similar interests of the spouses, father and son, daughter and mother, the dissimilarity of values, life guidance, beliefs and experiences of family members. The next cause for family burnout is a small amount of recreation for all family members, ways of switching from the regime of individual professional activities to family leisure. Participants in the therapeutic process, especially women, also call gender stereotypes among the causes of family burnout. Men are often satisfied with the role of the sponsor, being completely passive to numerous family roles, to the domestic duties sharing. Participants of therapeutic interviews also call as the cause for family burnout the low tolerance to the individual identity of marital partner. They talk about the disparity of characters, and different ways of emotional response to the events.

The men and women who go to a therapist usually accentuate different causes of discontent with their lives, themselves and each other. In our study, we found the following characteristics of male and female dissatisfaction with their family lives.

Women usually have many complaints of loneliness, lack of understanding and support. They suffer from communicative dependencies, whether from their mother or from the husband or from their own child. Explaining their own dissatisfaction with life, women talk about inattention of a partner, his isolation from children, from everyday household problems; they speak also about problems with their own attractiveness, weight, age-related changes.

Men are more often dissatisfied with the state of their health, which affects not only their professional but also

personal, sexual activity. They frequently pass responsibility for their unsatisfactory state to their wives, to life circumstances. Men talk of extremely humiliating attempts by their wives to manipulate, to blame, to use them. It is difficult for men to tolerate women's anxiety, desire to have a total control, which is masked by interest, and care. Men think that their financial status is more important to women than features of character, propensities or interest.

In the psychotherapist's office the women and men often talk about the long and unsuccessful quest for themselves, the desire for professional self-realization, doing something meaningful, interesting, useful. Women are more likely to be ready to work without significant material support if they perceive their activities as creative, and relationships at work as friendly. They are better adapted to the unstable conditions of life, the new collective's, and leader's claims than men. Men are more likely to achieve financial well-being, career growth and are more afraid of losing their jobs [12].

By developing narrative preventive practices, we encouraged the husbands and wives to see, understand and accept existing gender differences in understanding the causes of family burnout. For this purpose, the couple on behalf of each other wrote small stories about a certain intense period of their lives and then discussed them together with a therapist. The pair actively discussed what exactly surprised them in texts written on their behalf, and what was predictable. It was important to maintain a benevolent tone of discussion, not allowing the transition to aggressive reproaches and mutual accusations.

Next we tried to develop a joint vision of the situation, to find common interpretations of what is happening, taken by both spouses. We suggested that the husband and wife choose those interpretations in the partner's narrative that they could include in their description of the situation. Then we asked each spouse to choose those moments of partner's interpretations that they could not accept. We asked husband and wife to name the conditions under which they would be able to accept the

partner's point of view. If some position of the partner remained unaccepted, it was important to jointly practice a tolerant attitude towards this.

The next practice of preventing family burnout is the practice of creating a joint, integrated history of past experiences. In working with couples, the method of overcoming kaleidoscope of man's and women's memories was effective. Depending on the characteristics of the previous traumatic experience, each spouse differently remembered the sequence of the experienced understandings; each of them forgot something and supplemented it with fictions. To recover the common history resilience we suggested that the spouses discard all the moments of their stories, in which their partner doubts, and draw up a general text only from mutually confirmed facts.

Then we asked to change the focus of the joint family biography. There can be quite a lot of little stories about one concrete event or period of life, and the stories can be much altered. Every person can describe a marriage, a divorce, a betrayal, a career enhancement or conflict with relatives in a different way as interconnected or autonomous stages of life. He or she can build stories in an optimistic way, and can focus only on the accumulation of stressful overloads. They can define their own role in each event, can look for external causes of what happened, or talk about the responsibility of the spouse, the lack of support from relatives and friends. To change the focus of the narrative we proposed husband and wife to rewrite or retell it in each of these different focuses.

The family creates an increasingly consistent and mutually acceptable history of their life by combining already known fragments in a new way and focusing on the positive aspects of the mutual past. The autobiographical genre is not only the genre of self-knowledge and self-representation, but also the genre of self-transformation, self-design. And this applies not only to the individual, but similarly to the family, which also

authorizes the own common biography and designs the family future.

The main protagonist of the joint autobiography is a desirable, idealized, larger or less mature image of a happy family. Therefore, it is desirable to complete the practice of preventing family burning as follows. Each partner is invited to create a narrative about the future of their family. The partner then has to foresee the key moments of such a spouse's forecast. In the following couples get acquainted with all the nuances of each other futuristic narratives. Constructive dialogue, and friendly discussions are the stages of writing a common narrative about the desired future.

The integration of traumatic memories into a more coherent personal history of each member of the marriage and the family as a whole, which took place in the earlier stages of psychotherapeutic work, contributes to the construction of a consistent and approaching to reality family narrative.

The strength of the study is the development of original narrative practices for restoring the burnout families. But there are also the limitations of the study. We found that common narratives do not always become an effective way of preventing family burnout. In Yu. Lyubimova study conducted by author's guidance it was found that the family often creates five types of common narratives. These are narratives of domination-subordination, autonomy, confluence, cooperation, and care [1]. Among them, only the narrations of cooperation and care serve a burnout prevention function, while others for the various reasons do not perform this function.

To help the couples whose basic type of family narrative is domination-subordination, it is desirable to use practices aimed at eliminating tension in relationships, finding ways to reconcile different expectations, values, and interests. It is important that the dominant partner gradually learns to become more attentive to the subordinator, respect his/her right to be different. Only after this preparatory phase we can begin to

work in the direction of creating the common life story which would become an effective way of preventing family burnout.

To help the couples whose basic type of family narrative is full autonomy, it is desirable to use awareness strengthening practices. It would help spouses to understand the possible irreversible consequences of long-term removal. It is desirable to restore lost trust and mutual understanding, to form common views and convictions. This prolonged preparatory stage would create a basis for further work of preventing family burnout.

To help the couples whose basic type of family narrative is confluence it is advisable to focus on the distribution of responsibilities. Spouses need to learn how to distribute daily duties between themselves, how to take responsibility for certain areas of family life, how to change roles if there is such a need. More equitable distribution of everyday family activities evokes awareness of the unevenness of each other and strengthens the adaptation to the individual dissimilarity of each spouse.

Conclusions. The family burnout is the peculiar state of communicative exhaustion with painful physical, emotional, somatic symptoms which a person can experience in the destructive relations.

There are the typical causes of family burnout:

- lack of commonality practices;
- imbalance of the regime of individual and collective labor - individual and collective recreation;
- the pressure of gender stereotypes regarding the rights and responsibilities of women and men in the family;
- low tolerance to the individual peculiarity of the marriage partner.

Components of dissatisfaction with own lives in men and women create different configurations and, accordingly, their manifestations, experiences, and their comprehensions are completely different. The main causes of dissatisfaction with themselves and each other for women are: loneliness, lack of

understanding, attention and support; communicative dependencies; ignoring the husband's parental and domestic responsibilities. For men the main causes are: their wives' attempts to manipulate, to control them, to use their financial status, which seems more important than features of character and personality traits; lack of interest to their professional self-realization.

The effective narrative practices of preventing family burnout are: a) "impersonation practice", that is the writing the story on behalf of each other; b) "lego-practice" that is combining separate fragments of each spouse stories and creating the general narrative; c) "practice of common past creating" that is the memories kaleidoscope overcoming and integrating experiences of the couple; d) "practice of focus changing" that is stimulating the creation of alternative stories about the same period of life; e) "practices of common future creating" that is the family writing the narrative about the desired family perspectives.

The common narratives become an effective way of preventing family burnout if the couple is not creating the common narratives of domination-subordination, autonomy, and confluence. Only the family narrations of cooperation and care serve a burnout prevention function.

The application of narrative practices in the process of comprehension of the common life experience improves the integration of traumatic memories into a more coherent personal story of each member of the marriage particularly and family story in a whole.

Prospects for further research are the study on individual risks during creating a joint family narrative; study on traumatic narrative impact to the family well-being; study on ways to understand projections by co-authors of narrative.

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