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## **Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Psychological and Pedagogical Support for Children and Adolescents Temporarily Displaced from the Territories of Permanent Residence**

**Olga Popova<sup>1</sup>, Liudmyla Koval<sup>2</sup>, Olena Horetska<sup>3</sup>**

**Nataliia Serdiuk<sup>4</sup>, Vera Burnazova<sup>5</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Many children and adolescents experience traumatizing occurs including but not limited to military attacks, death of close people, demolition of houses, witness to the death of others, refugee status etc. These people need help and support of specialists to restore their psycho-emotional state, to overcome the consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder. This need increases the role of educational institutions, namely the professional activity of teachers and practical psychologists, which require improvement of existing and development of new methods of social adaptation and psychological and pedagogical rehabilitation of children and adolescents temporarily displaced from the ATO zone (Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone) in Ukraine to overcome symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Teachers and students of the Berdiansk State Pedagogical University actively participate to develop pedagogical assistance and support for children and adolescents, who temporarily displaced from the territory of the ATO zone, to overcome the consequences of traumatic events and solve their own psychological problems. By elaborating this experience, this study concludes that the optimal development of the child occurs in a family where each member has influence on him; the restoration of the state of mind is possible if the qualified psychological and pedagogical support will be organized; overcoming of psychotrauma will be effective when social contacts with other people will be established. The close cooperation of psychologists and teachers with parents, the educational environment will speed up the process of rehabilitation and adaptation of children and adolescents who are experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical support, Post-traumatic stress disorder, Interaction with children and adolescents, Forced migrants from the ATO zone, Overcoming psychotrauma.

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<sup>1</sup> Candidate of pedagogical sciences, assistant professor, Berdiansk state pedagogical university. E-mail: [ippom@ukr.net](mailto:ippom@ukr.net)

<sup>2</sup> Doctor of Pedagogics, professor, Berdiansk state pedagogical university. E-mail: [poi2009bam@ukr.net](mailto:poi2009bam@ukr.net)

<sup>3</sup> Candidate of psychological sciences, assistant professor, Head of Department of Psychology, Berdiansk state pedagogical university. E-mail: [goreckaya73elena@gmail.com](mailto:goreckaya73elena@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Candidate of psychological sciences, Senior lecturer, Berdiansk state pedagogical university. E-mail: [serdyuknata85@gmail.com](mailto:serdyuknata85@gmail.com)

<sup>5</sup> Candidate of pedagogical sciences, assistant professor, Berdiansk state pedagogical university. E-mail: [veronik3105@gmail.com](mailto:veronik3105@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The events of recent years that occur in Ukraine, the extremely complex social and political situation in society, have proved the need for providing psychological and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents who, together with their families, were forced to leave their homes and temporarily move to other regions of our country. According to a psychological study conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Donetsk and Lugansk regions, almost 40% of children aged 7-12 years and over half of children aged 13-18 years witnessed directly events related to the war. Accordingly, 14% and 13% saw military equipment, 13% and 22% – battles and clashes, 4% and 15% – beating of familiar people; 6% and 5% witnessed the threats of using weapons. 10% of the children surveyed saw the dead and wounded. 76% of children aged 7-12 years and 43% of teenagers were afraid when they witnessed the events described above (UNICEF, 2018). Children and adolescents, experiencing difficult life situations in which they found themselves in connection with temporary relocation from the territories of permanent residence, including from the ATO area (Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone) in Ukraine, are considered as serious, traumatic, requiring special attention, support and assistance. Scientists (E. Deblindzher, Dzh. Koen, E. Mannarino, N. Tarabrina, V. Solomin and others) under the term «severe traumatic situation» mean sudden or unexpected fragments in a person's life that violate its activities, prevent achievement of goals, generate emotional tension, stress disorders, anxiety, that is, lead to psychological trauma (Tarabryna, 2009).

Many children and adolescents, even after experiencing the events that have traumatized them (military attacks, death of close people, demolition of houses, witness to the death of others, refugee status etc.), do not show any specific symptoms (Miuller, 2014). This is facilitated by a certain level of mental development, resistance to external threats, individual characteristics and external sources of support. Natural mechanisms of the psyche of children and adolescents allow them to self-repair by playing with peers, fantasizing, drawing, emotional response to situations, etc. (Kisarchuk et al., 2015b). Despite this, there remains a significant contingent of the above-mentioned category of people who are in need of help and support of specialists to restore their psycho-emotional state, to overcome the consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder. All this significantly increases the role of educational institutions, namely the professional activity of teachers and practical psychologists, which require improvement of existing and development of new methods of social adaptation and psychological and pedagogical rehabilitation of children and adolescents temporarily displaced from the ATO zone to overcome symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

**The purpose of the article** is to reveal the peculiarities of the provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents temporarily displaced from the territories of permanent residence as a result of combat operations, undergoing post-traumatic stress disorder.

## Discussion

### ***Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder***

Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder scientists Dzh. Koen, E. Mannarino, E. Deblindzher and others treat as behavioral, cognitive, physical and/or emotional difficulties of children and adolescents. Let us characterize the signs of these conditions, taking as a basis the data of the American National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders, according to the age features (Koen, 2016).

Accordingly, *preschool children (1-6 years old)* are characterized by weakness and passivity, the lack of usual reactions; increased excitability; cognitive confusion; the difficulty of talking about a stressful event; sleep disturbance; fear of separation from a close person; regressive symptoms (eg, return of urinary

incontinence, loss of ability to speak, motor skills, jactitation), somatic symptoms (abdominal pain, headaches, etc.); increased reaction to loud sounds; «freezing» (sudden immobility) fussiness, uncharacteristic crying; avoiding contact with others.

*Younger schoolchildren (6-10 years old)* have several other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, namely: sense of responsibility and guilt; recurring traumatic game; a sense of anxiety when reminded of a threatening event; nightmares; aggressive behavior, outbursts of anger, fear of feeling pain, trauma; close attention to parents' anxiety; evasion from school; special care for others; behavioral, emotional, personality changes; somatic symptoms (complaints of physical pain) propensity to seclusion; age regress (behaves like a younger child); separation anxiety from the close person even for a short time; a significant decrease in the ability to concentrate thoughts during school hours, loss of interest in any activity.

In the age of *adolescence (12-18 years)*, selfishness is characteristic; life-threatening behavior; rebellion at home or at school; drastic changes in the relationship; depression, sleep and nutrition disorders, nightmares, avoiding communication; loss (partial or complete) of interest in learning; an attempt to distance oneself and protect oneself from feelings of shame, humiliation, anger; excessive activity with other people, or avoiding communication to resolve an internal conflict; desire for revenge (Kisarchuk et al., 2015b).

Of course, all these signs and symptoms prevent forced migrants, especially children and adolescents, from successfully adapting to a new life environment and society.

### ***Expreince of ATO zone***

Taking into account the fact that Berdiansk is located in the front-line zone, teachers and students of the Berdiansk State Pedagogical University actively joined and organized the work to provide timely and qualified psychological and pedagogical assistance and support that allowed children and adolescents temporarily displaced from the territory of the ATO zone to overcome the consequences of traumatic events, to solve their own psychological problems.

Hence, for the purpose of gaining practical experience, the teachers of the Department of psychology, the staff of the educational psychology consultative laboratory and the students of the specialty «Practical Psychology» systematically participated in the educational teleconferences held by the leading volunteer specialists in practical psychology and social work of the USA: «Monitoring and accompanying people in severe emotional states as a result of the loss of the close ones»; «Successful adaptation of immigrants: cooperation of psychologists and volunteers»; «Aggression – resentment – anger as a normal reaction of forced migrants in Ukraine». In addition, practical advice was received during the following trainings: «Psychophysiology of trauma», «Technology of launching and supporting women's groups», «What causes stimulate victims with PTSD symptoms to substitute effective coping strategies for alcohol/drugs?» etc. (organizer –Development Foundation [www.facebook.com/foundationdvcom](http://www.facebook.com/foundationdvcom) and «Save Your Soul» (Vinnitsa); All-Ukrainian public organization of volunteer psychologists «DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION» (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Development-Foundation/416009798562528?Sk=info>) Save Ukraine to families of ATO).

The above mentioned activities contributed to a qualitative theoretical training in the provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents temporarily relocated from the ATO zone; opportunities to talk with volunteer psychologists from different cities of Ukraine and exchange experience of such rehabilitation work.

Teachers of the Department of Psychology - Candidate of Psychological Sciences, assistant professor Olha Frolova and senior lecturer Olena Kolpakchi attended courses «The war trauma» organized by the

Humanitarian Center of R. Akhmetov (180 hours). A mandatory condition for training under the program «Children and War» was its implementation in work with groups of children and adolescents who have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In general, the acquired theoretical and practical experience has enabled the qualitative conducting of individual consultations on various requests of clients temporarily moved from the ATO zone. The psychological and pedagogical problems of queries that have already been addressed by more than a thousand people are diverse: «How to overcome the consequences of traumatic events?»; «What are the symptoms of the impact of psycho-traumatic situations?»; «How to adapt to a peaceful life?»; «How to create the skills of emotional stress-resistance?»; «How to support the relatives who participated in the ATO?»; «How to help the children of forced migrants from the ATO zone regain interest in studying?», «How to help a child who has been forced to resettle, become a member of the already formed pupil collective?», etc.

The organization and conduct of training work with children and adolescents temporarily displaced from the ATO zone allowed them to more effectively overcome the consequences of the trauma; created conditions for identifying internal resources, launching self-healing mechanisms and finding ways to solve complex life situations.

The experience of interaction with children and adolescents who were forcedly relocated from the ATO zone made it possible to state that their recovery process is possible if there are the following components: the creation of psychological comfort and comfort in the family; providing qualified psychological and pedagogical support; establishing social ties with the new environment.

## **Results**

The provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents from the forced migrants families was carried out in the following three main aspects: the restoration of the personality under the influence of parental care in the family; creation of a favorable psychological and pedagogical climate in the educational environment; individual counseling to overcome post-traumatic syndrome.

To effectively restore the psyche of children and adolescents who survived stressful situations, a safe and stable educational environment was created, in which there was a constant, clear and understandable mode of their livelihood; reliable pedagogical and psychological support.

*1. Restoration of the personality under the influence of parental care in the family.* Working with a close environment of a child or teenager includes psychological educational and advisory work with parents. Equilibrium, emotional stability, parents' confidence positively influence the full rehabilitation of children. It is clear that with adults it is also necessary to carry out a separate rehabilitation work, but for this it will be enough to inform parents about the peculiarities of the manifestation of stress in children and its consequences. Practical recommendations on how to act in difficult crisis situations can also be useful for parents.

According to scientists P. Voloshyna, Z.H. Kisarchuk, Ya. M. Omelchenko, H.P. Lazos, L.I. Lytvynenko, L.H. Tsarenko and others (2015), the family is an important factor in the psychological well-being of children and adolescents, because it is able to constantly maintain, instill a sense of security and confidence. Therefore, when working with parents, teachers of the Department of Psychology and employees of the advisory educational psychology laboratory, students advised the following:

- Carefully look at the psychological state of children and adolescents, notice the slightest deviations in their behavior and provide the necessary support;

- Take your child's problems seriously, even those that you think are not significant, because indifference can lead to a worsening of the psychological state;
- Create a familiar environment for the child in a new place of residence, using items brought with them; maximally restore the conditions, the daily schedule, which were before the move;
- To help the child in every possible way to find new friends, respect people around, allow them to visit their homes or invite them to their homes;
- Properly respond to any words of children, especially those that indicate the slightest manifestations of unwillingness to live (hysteria, blackmail, usual exaggeration, etc.);
- To be interested in studying of children: ask about school, help with the homework, encourage additional classes. It is important to maintain contact with the school administration, explain to teachers the situation in your family, consult with them;
- Praise the child even for small achievements, without focusing on failures (Sotsialno-pedahohichna, 2015).

2. *Creation of a favorable psychological and pedagogical climate in the educational environment.* Assistance to children and adolescents with post-traumatic stress syndrome was provided in the following aspects:

- Psychodiagnostics, which was carried out on the basis of observations of behavioral reactions, analysis of statements and the use of special techniques that reveal the characteristics of the emotional-volitional sphere;
- Psychological counseling that envisioned individual and group work (Bochkor et al., 2014). Particular attention was paid to such a method as empathic listening, which removes part of the inner emotional tension;
- Psychological counseling and pedagogical education of the staff of an educational institution to accompany children and adolescents in order to create a safe and friendly environment;
- Psychocorrection of posttraumatic stress disorder aimed at improving adaptation to new learning conditions and overcoming psychotraumatic effects.

3. *Individual counseling to overcome post-traumatic syndrome.* Of course, the main and most thorough in this process was the activity of a psychologist and teacher, which was realized both in individual form and in a group one (Kisarchuk et al., 2015b). The provision of psychological and pedagogical support for children and adolescents affected by stress factors consisted of the following stages:

- *Restoring a sense of security* that involved the removal of emotional tension, which was a protective mechanism in response to a difficult life situation, as well as creating a trustful atmosphere, establishing a positive emotional contact. At this stage we used the techniques of bodily oriented psychotherapy («Butterflies», «The Lord of the weather», the game «Early in the morning two lambs ...», etc.); self-regulation («Flame of the Candle», «Sparkle of Goodness», «Golden Stream» etc.) and breathing techniques («Square breathing», «Blowing on a dandelion», etc.);
- *Restoration and strengthening of the child's psychological resources*, which contributed to the activation of the internal mental state of the individual's resources and allowed her to successfully overcome the post-traumatic syndrome. Among the most effective techniques we used the following: art therapy («Place of Personal Strength», «Magic Tree», etc.); fairy tale therapy («Making a Tale of a Hero»,

etc.); doll therapy («The Doll of My Feats», etc.); work with metaphorical associative maps («42», «Source», «Dixit», «Master of fairy tales», etc.);

➤ *Responding to negative experiences of children and adolescents related to stress factors.* Among the techniques we used game psychotherapy («Wicked», «Magic bag», «Minus-Plus», «General cleaning», etc.), sand therapy («Map of my world» techniques, «5 lighthouses», etc.) as well as art therapy (techniques «Farewell to ...», «I am a magician», «Vulcan», etc.);

➤ *Activation of natural mechanisms of self-healing in children and adolescents, their adaptation to new circumstances* were realized during relationships with the family, communicating with peers, attending interesting events, engaging in creative activities, and the like. Teachers and psychologists tried to show the possibilities of the new environment, to model the image of a promising, successful future in the implementation of various techniques, in particular, «Tryptych», «The Universe of My Self», «Draw Yourself in Ten Years», «The Program of Success» and others.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the scientific literature and our own experience show the relevance of the problems of providing psychological and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents who were forcedly relocated from the territories of the ATO zone. The results of the study of this work indicate that the optimal development of the child occurs in a family where each member has influence on him; the restoration of the state of mind is possible if the qualified psychological and pedagogical support will be organized; overcoming of psychotrauma will be effective when social contacts with other people will be established. The close cooperation of psychologists and teachers with parents, the educational environment will speed up the process of rehabilitation and adaptation of children and adolescents who are experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

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