



Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor

**TORTURE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,
MENTAL HEALTH REHABILITATION AND
LEGAL AID**

GUIDEBOOK



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Kingdom of the Netherlands

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor

**TORTURE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,
MENTAL HEALTH REHABILITATION AND
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GUIDEBOOK

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**THE EXPERIENCE OF TORTURE,
MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND
LEGAL ISSUES**



Torture: The Methods of Torture

Torture presents a purposeful act of inflicting physical or psychological pain on an individual intended for: punishment, revenge, submission/compliance, confession(in order to obtain information), forcing a person to change political or other views, intimidation, forcing someone to cease an intended action, and oppression (psychological break down). Torture is carried out by individuals, by groups of individuals, or by the government. Torture is the most serious violation of human rights.

There are two methods of torture: physical and psychological, but often these two methods are combined:

Methods of physical torture:

- beating
- thermal torture (burning with cigarette, iron etc.)
- hanging with tied hands and feet
- restricting movement
- torture via a strong blinding light
- electric torture
- asphyxia
- mutilation
- various forms of sexual abuse etc.

Methods of psychological torture:

- forced vigilance (when a person is not allowed to sleep)
- restriction of basic needs (food, water, toilet, etc.)
- sensory deprivation
- witnessing the torture of others
- coercion to carry out morally unacceptable acts
- intimidation and humiliation

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- pharmacological torture (use of psychotropic or other drugs)

Torture – A Psychological Trauma

In psychology, torture is considered one of the biggest traumatic events, which causes a wide range of mental disorders and is characterized by long-term negative consequences. Torture destroys a human being completely - physically, emotionally, and socially. A person who has been subjected to torture, violence, or ill treatment becomes extremely sensitive and vulnerable; in addition, one's attitude towards his/her self and others is completely destroyed. In most cases, people who suffer from torture are unable to trust anyone, cannot understand their own feelings and often show cruelty towards others, as if to seek revenge for the humiliation they were subjected to.

Trauma that is associated with torture affects a person's social and cognitive functioning, physical state, behavior, and overall mental health. It is important to properly define a traumatic event:

An event can be considered traumatic if:

- It is a massive and compelling threat towards human security
- It causes feelings of fear and worthlessness due to the possibility of a repetition of horrible events

In the case of torture, the traumatic event appears in a prolonged/extended form and an individual constantly feels that his/her life is in danger. The victim feels uncertain and continues to expect that terrible atrocities will yet again occur. During torture, the victim is detained and the perpetrator has control. The main weapon in this case for the perpetrator is to replicate the torture. In fear of subjection to the same or worse pain, the hopeless victim obeys the perpetrator.

Thus, torture leaves severe traumatic marks on a person's mental health, which may manifest itself in the following disorders and problems:

Psychosomatic disorder - cardiovascular problems (hypertension)

digestive problems (such as ulcers), endocrinology problems, asthma, etc.

Generalized anxiety disorder - an anxiety disorder characterized by elevated/excessive, uncontrollable and often irrational worries. Increased anxiety interferes with a person's daily functioning; he/she constantly awaits for some disaster to happen and shows excessive anxiety in regards to everyday issues, such as health, money, family problems, interpersonal relationships, or employment.

Psychoactive substance use/dependence syndrome – behavioral, cognitive, and physical changes resulting from the repeated use of psychoactive substances. During this time, a person exhibits a strong demand for the substances.

Somatization - a person is showing somatic (bodily) symptoms, which are presented without any biological causes; usually these symptoms are due to psychological origins.

Depression - a person will display low mood, loss of interest, loss of receiving pleasure (Anhedonia), decreased energy, and low activity level. Patients often tend to blame themselves, have feelings of worthlessness, become pessimistic, and sometimes have thoughts of inflicting self-harm.

Post-traumatic stress disorder - is most likely to occur as a result of a severe traumatic experience (torture and ill-treatment). Therefore, it is important to pay attention and talk about the disorder.

Experience of Torture and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) refers to a combination of symptoms a person develops as a result of a traumatic event.

A person with PTSD often suffers from repeated memory invasions related to traumatic events. It is possible for a person to have feelings

of reliving the event expressed in “flashbacks” and nightmares. The symptoms can be depressing and confusing, and may be accompanied by physical reactions such as shaking and/or sweating.

Based on the severity of the traumatic event, many people who suffer from PTSD may avoid people and places associated with the trauma; it is also common to avoid talking about the experience. In addition, problems in regard to recalling the event are pretty normal, such as forgetting an entire or particular section of the event. On the contrary, sometimes a person constantly thinks about the experience (For example, why did this happen to me? Could I have avoided the event?)

People with PTSD tend to have heavy emotions, such as feelings of shame and guilt. They may believe they are undeserving of offered help. It is incredibly difficult to deal with such painful emotions.

How to Avoid Painful Feelings and Memories

Reactions that follow traumatic stress are normal responses to an unusual experience. There are methods/techniques of self-help, which are useful during the emotional build up resulting after the traumatic experience, such as the following:

- Unable to sleep because of unpleasant thoughts
- Suddenly you remember the traumatizing episode
- You discover that you try to avoid everything that reminds you of the event. These situations are very difficult to tackle, due to the invasion of unpleasant memories, which over time can be more disturbing and thus more effort to heal the wound is needed.

Typically, symptoms become worse over time because a person usually uses the wrong strategies to tackle them:

1. *Trying to make the switch and forcing yourself to think about something else.* Shortly after using this method, you are re-

minded of unfavorable memories from circumstances which are not even associated with the traumatic event. Associative processes are fixed on traumatic experiences, so no matter how hard you try the mind still takes you to the same thoughts you wish to avoid.

2. *Using your own body as a means of self-regulation.* It may be muscle stretching, mouth clinching, teeth grinding, finger cracking, lip biting or any form of inflicting self-harm. This method only helps you to get rid of unpleasant feelings for a very short time.
3. *The state of indifference.* You somehow achieve the state of indifference towards everything, which can be achieved by consuming alcohol, psychotropic or other narcotics. These only bring temporary relief and not only fail to solve the problems, but make them worse.

Traumatic experiences are very personal, but the recommendations given below will guide you towards helping yourself and others:

- ✓ Give yourself time and space to really understand what happened to you. It is normal to have heavy (strong) emotions about the experience.
- ✓ Try not to be self-critical towards the problems you are facing. Many people have similar problems, and this is not a sign of weakness.
- ✓ You may want to avoid social activities and the company of your loved ones, but it is important to remain close with the people who care about you, for their concern is vital. Also, try to avoid alcohol and drug use because this method may work for a while, but in the long run it will cause serious problems, damaging you and those around you.
- ✓ Drug and alcohol use can aggravate your symptoms and slow down the recovery process.

-
- Living a healthier life, walking, jogging, eating balanced meals, and working out regularly will help you with the recovery process
- ✓ Maintain an ordinary daily schedule. If you have sleep problems, try to go to bed and wake up at the same time. Avoid caffeine intake after 16:00 pm.
 - ✓ Set small goals which you previously avoided and try to tackle them.

Tips for Family Members, Spouse/Partners and Caregivers

It is important to consider some of the following methods while assisting the victim:

- The main goal for family members is to ensure the victim's safety. Make them feel that they are in a safe and peaceful environment. It is also important to help them avoid situations involving threats/intimidations such as minor conflicts, for it can cause negative effects.
- He/she needs a healthy emotional support system from you and needs to feel your affection, warmth, and love. However, showing too much affection or showing too little affection/negligence may cause unfavorable consequences.
- Try not to take symptoms like emotional fluctuations, anger, and stiffness personally. If a person with PTSD seems estranged and irritable remember that this has nothing to do with you.
- Never force a person who experienced trauma to talk about the event. But explain to him/her that whenever he/she will be willing to talk, you will be ready to listen.
- Traumatized persons often feel hopeless and embarrassed, because he/she cannot seem to cope with his/her symptoms.

Help him/her realize his/her strength and positive aspects.

- Help him/her recreate a daily routine, which will restore his/her sense of control and order. Help him/her start with small daily goals and try to help him/her realize each success.
- If these tips are unsuccessful, encourage them to seek professional help.
- It is important to focus on his/her strong (positive) aspects and search for alternative (different) ways to help him/her cope with the trauma.
- Keep in mind that only after adapting the required principles will the victim be able to find an appropriate way out of any situation, which will allow him/her to act effectively.

Exercises to Help You Cope with Tension and Anxiety

Exercises can be used in the moments of agitation, anxiety, and tension, as well as during conflicting situations in order to remain calm. Acquiring these techniques will help you to keep serenity/peacefulness and gain inner balance. Practicing relaxation exercises regularly will make you more resistant to stress. You can use breathing techniques in any situation, at any time in order to cope with stress related emotional and physiological tension.

Managing/controlling your breathing

- Sit or lie comfortable
- Inhale deeply through the nose (four seconds)
- Hold your breath for two seconds
- Exhale for four seconds
- Repeat steps

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is one of the easiest and most effective relaxation techniques. Sit comfortably and observe your body, with your breath steady, try to feel your feet/soles touching the floor. Tense them on the count to three; on the following count to three, relax them. Follow the above-mentioned steps and focus on every muscle where you feel tension or have an unpleasant sensation (burning). Control your breathing and focus on relaxation. After a few seconds, relax and observe as your muscles become looser and the tension fades away. Practicing this exercise will help you to identify the feelings associated with tense muscles; peace of mind comes only after physical relaxation.

Guided/ directed relaxation technique:

- Attempt to clear the mind, concentrate on relaxation and control your breath
- For deep relaxation, relax your muscles
- Close your eyes and focus entirely on the imagination; for example, imagine a nice warm day at the beach or a pleasant, relaxing image. Imagination may contain situations from the past or new situations

Even performing these exercises imperfectly will bring relief! Over time, your performance will be refined, and the tension better released.

When to Seek Professional Psychological Help

1. If you cannot tackle unpleasant feelings and suffer from bodily sensations, if the emotional intensity increases, and if you feel chronic tension, confusion, and emptiness.
2. If you feel inner emptiness and stiffness but keep yourself active in order to avoid thinking about the event.
3. If insomnia and nightmares persist/continue.
4. If you feel a need for sharing, yet you feel there are a lack of

-
- people around you with whom you can share your experience.
5. If you think that family problems have aggravated it and sexual problems have emerged.
 6. If the number of unfortunate incidents and car accidents have increased.
 7. If you continue to take a large amount of alcohol and medication.
 8. If you have problems at work and are unable to fulfill the obligations imposed on you.
 9. If you feel “burnt-out”.

Remember, you are the same person you were before the traumatic event.

Remember that if you are suffering for a long period of time you should use psychological help at your disposal.

Remember that the pain of trauma leads you towards healing. You might come out from the crisis much more experienced and mature.

Legal Regulations

In 1993, the Republic of Armenia adopted the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The state’s parties shall report to the Committee against Torture on the actions taken to fulfill their commitments under the Convention. Corpus delicti of the term ‘torture’ is provided under the articles below of the RA Criminal Code: Article 309.1 on Torture, Article 11 on Humanitarian Principle, Article 16 on Extradition of Persons who Committed a Crime, Article 390 on the Serious Breach of International Humanitarian Law during Armed Conflicts, Article 341 on Forcing Testimony, False Conclusion or Translation by the Judge, Prosecutor, Investigator or the Person in Charge of Inquiry, and Article 392

on Crimes against human security.

- “No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or humiliating treatment or punishment”, Article 11(2), RA Criminal Code;
- “... No one shall be extradited to foreign states if there are serious reasons to believe that they can be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment there ...”, Article 16(3), RA Criminal Code;
- “Willful infliction by or at the instigation, by order or with the knowledge of an official or any other person competent to act on behalf of a public authority of severe physical pain or causing intense mental suffering to exact information or confession from a person or a third person or to punish them for an act committed by that person or a third person or of the commission of which they are suspected or accused as well as to intimidate that person or a third person or coerce them into committing an act or refraining from committing it or for any reason based on any discrimination shall be punished by imprisonment...”, Article 309.1, RA Criminal Code;
- “...Forcing trial participants to provide testimony or clarifications or an expert to issue a false conclusion as well as a translator to provide incorrect translation on the part of the judge, prosecutor, investigator or the person in charge of inquiry through threats or any other illegal actions by using torture shall be punished by imprisonment...”, Article 341(2), RA Criminal Code;
- “... The committal of the following serious violations of international humanitarian norms during armed conflict against persons not immediately engaged in military actions or defenseless persons, the injured, the sick, medical personnel or clergy, sanitary units or sanitary means of transportation, prisoners

of war, civilians, civil population, refugees or other protected persons during military actions, including torture and inhuman treatment, including biological experiments shall be punished by imprisonment”, Article 390, RA Criminal Code;

- «... torture or cruel treatment of civilians, due to racial, national, ethnic identity, political views and religion, is punished with imprisonment...”, Article 392, RA Criminal Code.

BEYOND THE SILENCE

**Informative brochure for victims of
domestic violence**



Understanding Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic violence is a combination of coercive and violent behavior, which includes psychological, physical, sexual, and economic violence. The content of the brochure focuses upon the abuse between the partners / spouses.

Violence and abuse has only one goal – to gain and maintain control over you. The abuser uses blaming and intimidation techniques in order to gain control over you. Domestic violence happens to people of all ages, ethnicities, religions, and social groups. Despite the fact that more often victims of domestic violence happen to be women, it also affects men, who are particularly vulnerable in regards to verbal and emotional violence.

Abusive relationships are unacceptable, regardless of the affected party - women or men, adolescent or elderly.

You deserve to feel valued, respected, and protected!

Admitting the Abuse – The First Step Towards Accepting Help

Domestic violence often begins with verbal violence, which later aggravates into physical violence. Although signs of physical injury are more visible, the results of emotional and psychological violence are no less severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy your self-esteem, cause anxiety, depression, and make you feel helpless and lonely.

No one has to bear such pain. Your first step towards emancipation/freedom is acknowledging/recognizing that you are in an abusive relationship. Once you comprehend this reality, you will be able to find a way out and seek needed help.

Signs of a Violent Relationship

The most pronounced sign of a violent relationship is fear of your partner. If you feel fear, you constantly walk on tiptoes around your partner and watch what you say in order to not provoke the abuser. This sign symbolizes the relationship with your partner/spouse is unhealthy and abusive.

If your answer is yes to a majority of the following questions, it is more likely that you are in a violent relationship:

Your thoughts and feelings	Your partner's abusive behavior
<p>If you:</p> <p>Do you often feel fear towards your partner?</p>	<p>Your partner:</p> <p>Does he/she yell at you or humiliate you?</p>
<p>Are you avoiding some topics out of fear that it might upset/aggravate your partner?</p>	<p>Does he/she criticize and put you down?</p>
<p>Do you think that there is nothing you can do properly for your partner?</p>	<p>Are you embarrassed in front of your friends and family members because of the way he/she treats you?</p>
<p>Do you think you deserve pain and abuse?</p>	<p>Does he/she ignore or diminish your arguments and achievements?</p>
<p>Do you sometimes think that you are going mad/insane?</p>	<p>Does he/she blame you because of his/her violent behavior?</p>
<p>Do you feel helplessness and emotional stiffness?</p>	<p>Does he/she treat you like his/her property or object?</p>

Violent behavior of you partner:	Controlling behavior:
Your partner: Does he/she have an unpredictable and bad temper?	Your partner: Does he/she act excessively jealous? Does he/she consider you as his/her property?
Is he/she hurting you? Or does he/she threaten you that he/she's going to hurt you or even kill you?	Does he/she control where are you going or what are you doing?
Does he/she intimidate you that he/she's going to take away the children or even hurt them?	Does he/she force you to stay away from your friends and family members?
Does he/she threaten you that he/she will commit suicide in case you leave him/her?	Does he/she restrict your access to money, phone or car?
Does he/she force you to have sex with him/her?	
Does he/she destroy your property?	Does he/she check on you constantly?

Physical Abuse and Domestic Violence

Physical violence (beating, hitting, slapping, throwing things, etc.) is carried out in order to hurt or intimidate a person. Physical assault and/or beating is a crime, regardless of location and whether it be with or without the family. The police enforcement has the power and authority to protect you from physical attack.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence occurs in any situation where you are pressured to participate in unwanted, unsafe, or degrading sexual acts. Forced

sex, by your spouse or a partner, is an act of aggression and violence even though you may have had regular sexual interaction with him/her other times!

This is Violence, Even If...

- The violent incident may seem lighter in comparison to what you have read, seen on TV, or heard from other women. There is no such thing as a “worse” or “better” form of violence! You may be seriously injured even as a result of a slight push.
- The violent incidents have occurred more than once during your relationship. Studies show that if your partner abused you once, he/she will definitely repeat the action.
- Physical violence ceases once you become a passive individual and no longer express your wishes and act upon your free will. You are disregarding your rights in order to further avoid violence - this is not a victory!

Even if physical violence has not occurred, many women suffer from emotional and psychological abuse – comprehending these two types of violence may be difficult, but they have incredibly serious emotional ramifications for the victim.

Emotional Abuse – A Bigger Problem than You Think!

Oftentimes, when people think about domestic violence, they imagine battered women, but sometimes the abusive relationship does not involve physical violence. The fact that you are not beaten or injured does not mean that you are not a victim of violence. A number of women and men suffer from emotional violence, which significantly damages a person’s mental health. Unfortunately, emotional abuse

is often times minimized, ignored, and unseen - even when a person feels offended and humiliated in the relationship. The goal of emotional violence is to destroy your self-esteem, independence, and originality.

If you are the victim of emotional violence, it may seem that there is no hope to escape from the relationship, because you may believe that you are worthless without your partner.

Emotional violence includes the following: screaming, humiliation, name-calling, blaming, isolation, intimidation, controlling your behavior, etc. If you resist against the abuser/perpetrator, he/she may resort to physical violence.

You might think that physical violence is worse than emotional abuse because you may have visible scars, bruises, or even be hospitalized. However, although the scars of emotional violence are not physically visible, they are no less real and still have an indelible impact on your mental health. In some cases, emotional abuse can be even more damaging.

Economic and Financial Abuse - Subtle Forms of Emotional Abuse

Remember, the main goal of the abuser/perpetrator is to gain control over you and for this he/she often uses money. Economic and financial abuse includes the following:

- Strict control of your finances
- Blocks your credit and debit cards
- Receives information about your expenses
- Limits your basic needs (food, clothes, medicine, shelter etc.)
- Attempts to restrain your work and career- building
- Sabotages you at work (forces you to miss work and calls you constantly)
- Steals from you and takes away money from you

Violence and Abuse is the Choice of an Abuser

Violent acts by the perpetrator/abuser purposely target you for intimidation and control. The abuser/perpetrator uses various tactics in order to manipulate and gain control over you:

- **Dominance** - the abuser needs to feel that he/she is the leader in the relationship, and may often make decisions on behalf of you. He/she guides/directs your every step and expects you to obey. The abuser may treat you as his/her maid, child, or property.
- **Humiliation** - the abuser will do everything in order to make you feel useless and worthless. If you believe that you are worthless and unwanted, you will not want to leave him, therefore the abuser's goal will be reached. In order to destroy your self-esteem and make you feel useless and powerless, the abuser uses insults, derogatory names, shame, and public humiliation.
- **Isolation** – the abuser/perpetrator tries to detach you from the outside world, (separates you from friends and family members and may even forbid you to go to work) in order to increase your dependency on him. Gradually, you will become accustomed to ask him permission on every action (meetings, going somewhere etc.)
- **Threats/intimidations** – the abuser/perpetrator may threaten that he/she will hurt or kill you or your children, family members or pets. He/she might also threaten you that he/she will commit suicide, in case you leave him/her.
- **The pressure** – the abuser/perpetrator may use different methods of pressure in order to intimidate you. Such as startling looks and gestures, destroying objects, or keeping weapons in a visible place. He/she sends a clear message that if you do not obey, he/she will physically abuse you.

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- Denial and blaming - the abuser may ask forgiveness for the acts that are inexcusable. They may blame their difficult childhood, bad day and even the victim for their violent behavior. The abuser/perpetrator in many cases will diminish and may even reject the violent act. Oftentimes, he/she will blame you for his/her violent behavior.

The Abuser Can Control His/Her Behavior, He/She is Always Able to Do So

- The abuser always chooses the victim. They do not humiliate, intimidate, and attack everyone who hurt them. Usually, they choose their victims among the people close to them and often claim that they love them.
- The abusers carefully choose when and where to act. They tend to control themselves, as long as there are people around. Within society they can play a game, that everything is fine, but once left alone they erupt immediately.
- Abusers can control their violence when necessary. The majority of the abusers/perpetrators do not completely lose control over their behavior. Moreover, if necessary, they are able to stop their violent actions instantly (for example, if the police shows up).
- The perpetrator will deliberately hit you in areas where the scars are much less visible. Rather than acting out unpredictably or in distress, the majority of the attackers strategically carry out their strikes where the bruises and scars would be less visible.

The Cycle of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has its phases and dynamics, which is characterized by the following:

Abuse/violence – the violent partner carries out aggressive, degrading, or violent behavior in which he/she displays the power to demonstrate – “who is the boss in the relationship”.

Feelings of guilt – after committing a violent act, the abuser/perpetrator feels guilty and regrets the action, but his/her regrets are not because of what he/she has done but rather committing violent acts can create negative consequences– such as punishment (by family, law, etc.)

Apologizing – once the abuser realizes what he/she has done, he/she may apologize or blame the act on you. He/she will do everything possible in order to avoid taking responsibility for the incident.

“Typical” behavior –the abuser/perpetrator will do whatever it takes to regain control and maintain a relationship with the victim. He/she may act as if nothing happened, and will try to charm the victim and have a positive attitude. This peaceful “honeymoon” phase may give the victim a false hope that the abuser really changed.

Imagination/fantasy and planning – the abuser/perpetrator starts to plan how to abuse you again. He/she spends a lot of time thinking about what you have done wrong/poorly and how you should pay for it. Afterwards, he/she allows his imagination/fantasies to become a reality.

Implementation/violent act again – once the abuser/perpetrator plans his next violent act, he/she creates a situation which could justify the violent act against you.

The apologetic gestures and acts of love by the abuser/perpetrator between the above-mentioned stages of emotional, psychological, and physical abuse, thus makes the decision to leave the abuser/perpetrator very difficult for the victim. He/she can be very persuasive

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in stating that you are the only one who can help him/her, that he/she will change and that he/she really loves you. Remember that staying and continuing to live with him/her is very unstable and unsafe for you!

Under RA legislation, willfully causing a person severe physical pain or intense mental suffering, willfully inflicting a bodily injury or other heavy damage to one's health, intentional deprivation of life, sexual coercion or sexual abuse or committing violent sexual actions against one's will, shall be considered criminalized acts and are punished by imprisonment.

**Psychological Trauma and
Psychological Trauma
Related Mental Health Problems**



Traumatic Experiences

A traumatic experience compromises a person's sense of security due to an event involving danger and threats, which accompanies him/her throughout life. There are violent and dangerous events/experiences, which can be the cause of trauma. Any experience can be traumatizing, if:

- It contains massive and unbearable threats targeted towards human security
- Causes feelings of intense fear, worthlessness, and horror

A traumatic experience affects a person's social and cognitive functioning, physical health, behavior, and overall mental health. Particularly noteworthy are the following:

- ✓ **torture**
- ✓ **car accident**
- ✓ **rape or other forms of sexual violence**
- ✓ **domestic violence**
- ✓ **physical violence / abuse**
- ✓ **earthquakes and other natural disasters**
- ✓ **death of a loved one**
- ✓ **traumatic childbirth**
- ✓ **fire**
- ✓ **war**
- ✓ **witnessing someone's violent death, etc.**

Trauma alters our perceptions about ourselves and the world, thus destroying core beliefs which help us feel secure/safe and instead focus upon a realist's perspective of a harsh reality. Traumatic events cause people to change their model of the self and the universe, which is no longer a reflection of their past experiences. The process of change is complex and is often accompanied by a wide range of symptoms and mental disorders: **post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, drug abuse, etc.**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) refers to a combination of symptoms developed as a result of a traumatic event.

Persons with PTSD often suffer from repeated memory invasions related to traumatic events. It is possible for a person to have feelings of reliving the event expressed in so-called “flashbacks” and nightmares. The symptoms can be depressing and confusing, and may be accompanied by physical reactions such as shaking and/or sweating.

Based on the severity of the traumatic event, those who suffer from PTSD may avoid people and places associated with the trauma; it is also common to try to avoid talking about the experience. In addition, problems in regard to recalling the event are pretty normal, like forgetting an entire or particular section of the event. On the contrary, sometimes a person constantly thinks about the experience (For example, why did this happen to me? Could I have avoided the event?)

People with PTSD tend to have heavy(strong) emotions, which are painful and difficult to handle, such as feelings of shame and guilt. They may believe they are unworthy of offered help.

People with PTSD might be irritable and alarmed, exhibiting sleep and concentration problems. Those with PTSD are characterized by nervousness and mood swings; even ordinary events such as going to school and work or taking a walk with friends might be difficult tasks for them.

Symptoms related to post traumatic stress disorder can be divided into four groups:

1. Re-experiencing the event

- Event related disturbing thoughts and reflections.
- Recalling the event based on “triggers” such as familiar signs, noises or smells. In many cases, the trigger can be daily activities, which remind he/she of the traumatic event.
- Many exhibit severe distress, and constantly recall the event,

which can cause physical reactions such as heart palpitations and sweating.

- Having dreams about the event
- Reliving the event, which may be expressed via “flashbacks”. During a flashback, a person loses touch with reality, returns to the period of the traumatic event and re-experiences the event.

2. Avoiding reminders of traumatic experience

- A person with PTSD tries not to recall the traumatic event.
- A person with PTSD wishes to avoid people, places, or activities which are associated with the traumatic event

3. Hyper-arousal

- Sleeping problems
- Concentration problems
- Easily irritable and aggressive
- Constant expectation of threats and disasters

4. Changes in mood and thoughts

- Difficulties remembering key elements of the event
- Feelings of estrangement from relatives
- Blaming self and others
- Feelings of fear, shame and guilt
- Difficulties comprehending feelings of love and happiness
- Cannot receive pleasure from things that were pleasurable before the event

Please note that during PTSD a person can exhibit the following mental health problems: depression, anxiety, drug or alcohol addiction.

Psychoactive Substance Dependence

Alcohol and other substance abuse are very common among people who are diagnosed with PTSD. During the crisis many turn to powerful drugs or alcohol and/or consume large amounts of coffee and/or medication as a coping mechanism. All the above-mentioned substances interfere with a person's daily activities and cause long-term problems. For example, a large amount of caffeine intake enhances anxiety, while excessive alcohol use causes loss of self control. In addition, frequent use of these substances often causes addiction. Evidence shows that in 25% of cases, anxiety and depressive disorders develop, resulting in alcohol and drug addiction later on. All of these have negative effects on an individual, who is already in a difficult state. Taking medication can play a positive role for a very short time only, such as reducing insomnia; a small amount of alcohol intake can help with relaxation, stress reduction, ease the sleep process, and aid in the scattering of thoughts related to the traumatic event. However, long-term use of alcohol and medication instead of other remedies is highly discouraged. These accompanied disorders not only complicate the treatment of PTSD but also enhance PTSD symptoms.

Depression

As was mentioned earlier, depression and depression-related symptoms are expected after the experienced trauma. Depression is characterized by: low mood/mood swings, suffering from loss of emotional control, feelings of severe suffering, a loss of interest and energy, feelings of guilt, changes in cognitive (thinking) abilities, speech, and autonomic functions (sleep, appetite, sexual drive and other biological regularities). Stressful/traumatic events experienced during one's lifetime play a vital role in the development of depression.

Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety disorder is a mental health problem, which may develop after a traumatic experience. Anxiety disorder is characterized by increased anxiety, constant expectation of hazards, sudden irritation, restlessness, concentration problems, increased sensitivity towards noise etc. In addition to the above-mentioned symptoms, anxiety disorder can manifest itself in muscle tension (head and muscle pain) and sleep distortion (insomnia and nightmares).

Tips for Family Members, Spouse/Partners and Caregivers

- ✓ Try to be empathetic towards the traumatized person.
- ✓ Try not to be critical about the way someone handles the experience. Remember that he/she experienced dangerous and difficult situations.
- ✓ Try not to take symptoms such as emotional instability, anger and stiffness personally. If a person with PTSD seems estranged and irritable remember that this has nothing to do with you.
- ✓ Never force a person who experienced trauma to talk about the event. But explain to him/her that whenever he/she will be willing to talk, you will be ready to listen.
- ✓ Traumatized persons often feel hopeless and embarrassed, because they cannot seem to cope with their symptoms. Help them realize their strength and positive aspects.
- ✓ Help them recreate a daily routine, which will restore their sense of control and order. Help them begin with small daily goals and try to help them realize each success.
- ✓ If these tips are unsuccessful, encourage them to seek professional help.

Tips for Traumatized Persons

- ✓ Give yourself time and space to really understand what happened to you. It is normal to have heavy (strong) emotions about the experience.
- ✓ Try not to be self-critical towards the problems you are facing. Many people have similar problems, and this is not a sign of weakness.
- ✓ You may want to avoid social activities and the company of your loved ones, but it is important to remain close with people who care about you, for their concern is vital. Also, try to avoid alcohol and drug use because while this method can work for a while, in the long run it will cause serious problems, damaging you and those around you.
- ✓ Drug and alcohol use can aggravate your symptoms and slow down the recovery process.
Living a healthier life, walking, jogging, eating balanced meals, and working out regularly will help you with the recovery process.
- ✓ Maintain an ordinary daily schedule. If you have sleep problems, try to go to bed and wake up at the same time. Avoid caffeine intake after 16:00 pm.
- ✓ Set small goals which you previously avoided and try to tackle them.

When to Seek Professional Psychological Help

1. If you cannot tackle unpleasant feelings and suffer from bodily sensations, if the emotional intensity increases, and if you feel chronic tension, confusion, and emptiness.

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2. If you feel inner emptiness and stiffness but are keeping yourself active in order to avoid thinking about the event.
 3. If insomnia and nightmares persist/continue.
 4. If you feel a need for sharing, yet you feel there are a lack of people around you with whom you can share your experience.
 5. If you think that family problems have aggravated it and sexual problems have emerged.
 6. If the number of unfortunate incidents and car accidents have increased.
 7. If you continue to receive a large amount of alcohol and medication.
 8. If you have problems at work and are unable to fulfill the obligations imposed on you.
 9. If you feel "burnt-out".

Remember, you are the same person you were before the traumatic event.

Remember that if you are suffering for a long period of time you should use psychological help at your disposal.

Remember that the pain of trauma leads you towards healing. You might come out from the crisis much more experienced and mature.

Legal and Psychological Assistance

If you have suffered from torture and cruelty, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, please apply to receive free legal and psychological assistance.

List of organizations providing free legal and psychological assistance

Name of Organization	Contact Details	Type of Service Provided
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly - Vanadzor NGO (HCA Vanadzor)	Address Tigran Mets St., Vanadzor, RA Hotline 080001211 E-mail hcav@hcav.am Website www.hcav.am Skype hcav.vanadzor	Legal assistance
HCA Vanadzor Yerevan Office NGO	Address apt 21, build 3, Mashtots Ave., Yerevan, RA Tel. (+374) 10 53 61 72	Legal assistance
Helsinki Association Human Rights NGO	Address apt 8, build. 33, Moskovyan St., Yerevan, RA Tel. (+374) 10 531972 E-mail: hahr.yerevan@gmail.com, info@hahr.am Website www.hahr.am	Legal assistance
Foundation Against the Violation of Law NGO	Address 6, Arshakunyats Ave., Yerevan, Armenia Tel. (+374) 10 58 28 19 (+374) 98 58 28 19 Fax (+374) 10 58 28 19 Skype fav_armenia Website www.favl.am	Legal and psychological assistance

Helsinki Committee of Armenia human rights NGO	Address	3a, Pushkin St., Yerevan	Legal assistance
	Tel.	37410 56-03-72; 56-14-57	
	E-mail	info@armhels.com	
	Website	http://www.armhels.com	

If you have suffered from family violence (of psychological, physical, sexual, and economic nature) by your husband/wife or partner, please apply to receive free legal and psychological assistance.

List of organizations providing free legal and psychological assistance

Name of Organization	Contact Details		Type of Service Provided
Women's Resource Center NGO	Hotline	080001280	Legal and social-psychological assistance
	Tel.	(+374) 77991280	
	E-mail	contact@womenofarmenia.org	
	Website	http://www.womenofarmenia.org/	
Public Information and Need of Knowledge NGO (PINK Armenia)	Tel.	(+374) 60 377277	Legal and social-psychological assistance
	E-mail	info@pinkarmenia.org	
	Website	http://www.pinkarmenia.org	
Sexual Assault Crisis Center NGO	Hotline	0 800 01 280	Legal and social-psychological assistance
	Tel.	(+374) 77 99 12 80	
	E-mail	sacc.arm@gmail.com\	
	Website	http://womenofarmenia.org/en/programs/sexual-assault-crisis-center	

Women's Rights Center NGO	Hotline 80080850 Tel. (+ 374) 94565626; (+ 374) 10542828 E-mail wrcarm@arminco.com Website http://www.wrcorg.am/	Legal and social-psychological assistance
Women's Support Center NGO	Tel. (+ 374) 99887808 E-mail wsc.armenia@gmail.com Website http://www.womensupportcenter.org/ Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/WomensSupportCenter	Legal and social-psychological assistance
Society without Violence NGO	Tel. (+374) 60 42 81 92; (+374) 91 42 81 92 E-mail team@swv.am Website http://www.swv.am/ Rapid response group Webpage: http://rru.swv.am/	Legal and social-psychological assistance

Human Rights House Yerevan

Human Rights House Yerevan unites ten organizations working in various fields related to human rights protection aiming to create “one access door” services for the beneficiaries. Through these services, the organisation hopes to eliminate the difficulties that citizens may face for receiving human rights protection support and services. The House became an associated member of the Human Rights House Network in 2012 and was registered in Armenia in 2014.. It will also serve as a platform for different civil society organizations, movements, and civic initiatives in order to join the effort to ensure human rights protection in Armenia.

Human Rights House Yerevan
119/2, Hovsep Emin St., 0012, Yerevan, RA
Tel.: (+374) 93 417113
Website: www.humanrightshouse.org
E-mail: hrhyerevan@gmail.com

About HCA Vanadzor

Helsinki Citizen's Assembly-Vanadzor NGO (HCA Vanadzor) is a non-political, non-religious, non-profit, NGO, which unites individuals who support the supreme principles of democracy, tolerance, pluralism, and human rights.

HCA Vanadzor was founded in 1998 as a branch of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Armenian Committee. It was registered as an independent organization in 2001 and was re-registered in 2005 at the Ministry of Justice. The organisation's headquarters are located in the Lori province's largest city, Vanadzor. The organisation monitors activity, which occurs in the Lori province as well as within the remainder of the Republic of Armenia.

HCA Vanadzor's vision is an Armenian society, which upholds the supreme values of human dignity, democracy, and peace.

HCA Vanadzor's mission is to promote and support civil initiatives, strengthen the protection of human rights, and initiate peace-building activities on national and regional levels.

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