

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE GUILT COMPLEX

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Abstract: Many times, the guilt complex occurs in the case of the victims of domestic violence abuses. In order to solve this problem, therapy and patience are needed.

Keywords: domestic violence, guilt, complex

Rezumat: Complexul vinovăţiei apare de multe ori în cazul victimelor abuzurilor violenţei domestice. Pentru rezolvare este nevoie de terapie şi răbdare.

Cuvinte cheie: violenţă domestică, vinovăţie, complex

INTRODUCTION

The first serious problem is the omnipresent differentiation between the public and the private sphere. Traditionally, the woman is destined to the private sphere, while the man occupies the public sphere. Protecting the private sphere is one of the significant elements anchored in the human rights. This special important element has been introduced to limit the power and influence of the state, although many states use it to consider the infringement of human rights as a private problem, in which the state cannot and will not interfere. Violence on women takes place mostly in the private sphere.

The second problem focuses on protecting the individual against the direct interventions of the state, another central element of human rights. Factors, such as the protection of private persons or of non-governmental organizations were not mentioned from the beginning. A particularity is the fact that women's rights are not encroached upon directly by the state, but by private persons, who act based on the fact that their deeds will remain unpunished by the state authority. Such infringements of women's rights are often tolerated by the state.

The third problem is the fact that human rights so far anchored in the declarations did not specifically mentioned how the women's rights could be breached. So, it was supposed that the deeds that encroached men's rights are the same for women; this fact regards in fact problems such as their harassing by the state because of their political conceptions, race and religion. These problems are also the focus of national and international organizations. There are also deeds of breaching human rights specific to women, for example when belonging to the female sex leads to a worsening of their situation – rape, sexual torture in prisons and refugees' camps. Furthermore, there are other situations when women's

rights are infringed, such as the abortion of fetuses of female sex and marital violence.

The fourth problem is represented by centuries-old tradition, present in many countries in the world, regarding the infringement of women's rights. The moment the states try, at a national level, to end these traditions, they often encounter people's resistance. These traditions cannot be fought unless by introducing some long-lasting measures aiming at all spheres of human life. Many non-Western governments have drawn the attention on the fact that human rights have purely Western features and cannot be transferred into their cultures. Such, the "equality" between a woman and a man would not be compatible with many of these cultures. Some non-Western states plead for a so called "equivalence" when adopting fundamental differences. These arguments are often tolerated and often taken over through the tolerance perspective by the Western representatives and organizations. However, we must take into consideration that such arguments are used many times to justify huge breaches of human rights that are not the expression of some habits, but the consequences of the actions of certain repressive state systems (e.g. in Algeria or Afghanistan). Often, those identities and traditions used as a shield are artificially built to divert attention away from the social economical inequities and from the asymmetric power ratios.

The above-mentioned problems are strongly inter-connected, being the reason why, until the beginning of the 90s, the infringement of women's rights were not properly recognized. They were treated within the United Nations in separate committees, structurally isolated and insufficiently financed or were regarded as part of certain issues of the larger social economical sphere. Defenders of human and women's rights have criticized the contents of human rights starting with the late 80s and they demanded that they be completed with provisions that focus on women's interests and that articles should be introduced to forbid women's discrimination. The universal character of women's rights as human rights should be permanently consolidated even against the relativist arguments of the Islamic states.

Everybody speaks of equality in a relationship, of compromises, of the fact that the secret of a relationship is that both partners be equally involved, to

both compromise and sacrifice. Specialists sustain that even in the healthiest relationships, one of the partners has more power, but the power is detained in some regards by one of the partners, in others, by the other. This would be a relationship in which the power is divided 60:40. In a couple in which one has 70 and the other 30 in “the power domain”, we notice the “boss” going forward, making decisions for the family. He dominates through the use of the verbal manipulation elements, such as “if you love me, you will do this...”, “I will leave you if you dare contradict me” etc. When the ratio is 80:20, the relationship is abusive, the partner is reduced to silence, he/she does not fight back, does not fight at all, because he/she would be in danger, and at 90:10 the physical aggression comes along. The dominance-obedience percentages are merely marks, the balance inclines more and more towards the one who dominates, and the power to dominate is varied; these ratios can change in time.

Before coming to the rescue of abused women, it is important to understand the different dimensions of violence. Personal violence is often treated as a private problem. Reality shows us the fact that it must be treated otherwise. Despite the fact that women are physically and mentally affected, they are also spiritually affected. When abused, women look for alternative solutions, counselling and a state of peace from the spiritual leaders and institutions. The indifference and the lack of attention make them feel lonely, betrayed and upset. They ask themselves the question: “Where is God to help me in my pain and what is Church good for if it can not help me?”

For many people, guilt is a normal life fact. But to solve the guilt complex in the case of victims of abuses and domestic violence, and for the majority of emotional problems, therapy and patience are needed. For the majority of women the guilt feeling is so strong and persisting, that it seems to dominate them. The first step is recognizing the fact that this guilt complex has overcome the normal limits. The experience they suffered has destroyed their life, perspectives and the victims have lost the ability to live normally. In many cases, the aggressor has told only lies. It is not the victim’s fault that she believed him, she could not know when he was lying or telling the truth.

The first step in controlling the guilt is the constant recall of the fact that the ability to judge the level of guilt was sabotaged. So, when the guilt level is too large and depressing, we must refuse its acceptance. We need to fight! We must utter continually: “this is not the guilt level corresponding to the situation”. The guilt complex will attack again and again. We must repeat it over and over again - the guilt feeling will decrease.

Guilt is a subjective thing. Establishing a judgment requires experience and it takes time. If a woman suffers from the guilt complex she must not think: “all or nothing” because there is a risk for her to become either the most innocent or the most pathetic person on the planet. This way of thinking is incorrect and must disappear! Time and energy must be allocated because it is important. A value scale must be developed to replace

the existent one - all or nothing- the one the person has established in her mind. Any other alternative is better, so it is preferable to try and establish something that can help thinking. A numerical scale from 1 to 10 can be chosen, a musical scale, in which the high notes will show real guilt, and the low notes - an annoying, strong noise will signify the guilt feeling. So how loud can it be “heard”? It is also benefic to invent a colours’ scale or to use cartoon characters. There are cases in which people have established a scale based on smell: a cake just out of the oven means innocence, and rubbish smell means guilt. So what does our nose indicate? It is important to remember that the values scale must represent something more than “all” or “nothing”, because few things in life are 100% positive or 100 % negative. The victim must be taught to think in other colours than black and white – to choose grey - and she will feel the difference! Armed with the new standards, the woman is ready to attack her guilt complex.

Guilt is vague, but universal. When precisely does she feel guilty? She will have to indicate an incident. What does she feel guilty about? Two or three things must be enumerated. If she can enumerate some details that make her feel guilty, it means that the other parts of the incident are not worth the guilt feeling. In conclusion, she decreased on “the scale of the guilt feeling” from 100%. She must be taught to use her reasoning to fight back the guilt feelings (or any other feeling that makes her feel bad about herself). She must not count on feelings because she cannot trust them; she must use her reasoning to get them closer to reality. Thus, we attack irrational thoughts calmly. She must think about the fact that makes her feel guilty (did she make a mistake on purpose?). If it is a mistake, she must go down on the values scale! In the case in which the mistake was on purpose, it is good to think about the fact that she made a positive effort however. Whatever happens - can the problem be fixed? If so, it is better to pay the price than suffer and experience guilt. If an inconvenient should be involved, we must see how the situation can be solved. If no harm was done, maybe a danger resulted from the incident. In such cases, it is best for everybody to see the danger, to accept the responsibility and to explain future steps to avoid repeating the situations. The process will help understand the guilt, while the woman experiences new situations. The guilt complex will be diminished.

If we look around us, we notice many angry people. Sometimes people are their worse critics. It is best to watch the reactions of people involved and we could figure how far the guilt feeling should go. If some people are more understanding we must accept this. If a person is upset, it depends who he/she is upset with. Who determined the guilt feeling? We must refuse to listen to insults that could make someone feel guilty even though he/she has not got the slightest implication! That person should feel guilty not the one who listens. Those who induce the guilt complex know that their weapon is the power to determine someone else to feel guilty. We must not stay around them, it is better if we look for the

company of trustworthy persons. When trying to reduce the guilt, we must say that no one knows what is inside someone else's soul. We must be conscious of the evil we did and if needed, we must apologize. Speaking in a polite manner must be in accordance with the facial expression and with the mouth; we need not and should not go down to the lowest levels just to apologize to someone. The thought of a shade of grey could express exactly what someone feels!

There is a difference between actions and the value as human being. If someone did a foolish thing, it does not mean that he/she is a bad person. Many have a bad opinion about themselves and they think that if they could be perfect, all problems would be solved. Unfortunately nobody is perfect, though nothing is accomplished, thinking this way. "It is human to make mistakes". Others make mistakes too! We can make mistakes without excessively blaming us. There always will be a person to blame another. If we talk about a criminal it is expected of him to do so. The problem is that the persons who always have something to reproach do not take into consideration what that person did. It is all right to move on. The nagging person will not stop anyway. Other people have problems too. And so we get to the last point of the problem.

Remember: this article is not and will not be a replacement for a real course or therapy given by a specialist. You can make your life more beautiful if you accept things as they are. When fighting your guilt complex, your therapist will be there for you. Your guilt could be totally groundless. Or maybe, there is a truth about it, but it is something that can be easily fixed. Or it could be something serious. In any case, a specialized person is indicated. No matter how much you would love to make it on your own, you might be overwhelmed. ***When we talk about emotional problems, you must not fool around!***

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