

A Mental Healthcare Model for Mass Trauma Survivors

Control-Focused Behavioral Treatment of
Earthquake, War, and Torture Trauma

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War, and Torture Trauma

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Every effort has been made in preparing this book to provide accurate and
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every effort has been made to disguise the identities of the individuals involved.
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*mesele esir düşmekte değil,
teslim olmamakta bütün mesele!*

*falling captive is not the problem,
the problem is not to surrender!*

İşte Böyle Laz İsmail, Nazım Hikmet Ran, Yatar Bursa Kalesinde,
Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002, p. 170.

(Translated by Metin Başoğlu)

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Preface

Despite significant advances in treatment of psychological trauma in the last two decades, current knowledge in this field falls short of addressing the care needs of millions of mass trauma survivors around the world, particularly in developing countries. Such a challenging task requires brief and effective treatments that can be cost-effectively disseminated to survivors through all possible means, including health professionals, lay therapists, self-help tools, and even mass media. None of the current trauma treatments are suitable for this purpose. Drawing on 20 years of research aimed at development of brief and effective interventions and cost-effective treatment dissemination methods, this book represents a visionary approach to this problem with recourse to sound theory and evidence.

With its broad scope, this book will be of interest to a wide readership. A learning theory formulation of earthquake, war, and torture trauma in Part 1 might be useful for researchers as well as care providers in understanding mechanisms of traumatic stress common to different types of trauma events. A sound theory-based understanding of mechanisms of traumatic stress is essential in choice of interventions likely to be useful in helping trauma survivors. In view of the fact that the evidence base of learning theory originated largely from experimental work with animals, evidence pertaining to human behavior in support of this theoretical model might be of interest to students of learning theory. Such evidence in relation to torture trauma might also be of interest to human rights workers and legal professionals because of its relevance to definitional issues surrounding torture and the controversy regarding the distinction between torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

In view of the urgent need for evidence-based interventions for mass trauma survivors, Part 2 provides a step-by-step description of brief assessment and behavioral treatment strategies for earthquake, war, and torture survivors developed in the course of our work. Part 3 provides a mental healthcare model for earthquake survivors based on brief and largely self-help interventions together with the tools needed for implementation of the model in earthquake-prone countries. These tools include various screening and assessment instruments and two manuals designed for cost-effective dissemination of treatment knowledge to professional and lay therapists as well as to survivors. As such, the book might be of interest to individual care providers, disaster relief organizations, psychosocial aid groups, as well as governments of countries at risk of earthquakes. Also presented is a critical review of various issues in care of mass trauma survivors in the light of evidence in support of a learning theory formulation of trauma.

The mental healthcare approach described in this book aims at empowerment of mass trauma survivors. Although the importance of empowerment in recovery from trauma is widely recognized among care providers, the rather broad, elusive, and ill-defined nature of the concept has somewhat limited its usefulness in clinical or fieldwork with mass trauma survivors. A learning theory approach to trauma sheds light on the nature of psychosocial interventions that are conducive to empowerment of survivors. As such, the interventions described in the book are likely to be of interest to all care providers who believe empowerment is the way forward in effective care of survivors.

Acknowledgments

Ebru Şalcıoğlu and I dedicate this book, a product of nearly 20 years of research, to our good friend Marianne Gerschel, President of Spunk Fund, Inc. and Spunk Foundation International. She has had the insight and vision to recognize the importance of scientific research for the human rights cause and effective care of mass trauma survivors. She started supporting our research on mental health effects of torture trauma in the early 1990s at a time when torture was widely perceived in the Western world as an esoteric issue confined to remote dictatorships and when few funders were cognizant of the importance of scientific research in this area. Ms. Gerschel's support also made possible the large multi-site research project on cognitive effects of war and torture trauma in former Yugoslavia. When the 1999 earthquake in Turkey occurred, she was again there to help us launch a research program that led to the development of brief treatments for earthquake survivors. We were fortunate to have her with us at every stage of our work, taking part in shaping research ideas and providing us with moral support in dealing with the trials and tribulations of running large projects. Although she is too modest to acknowledge it, the work reviewed in this book would not have been possible without her loyal support over the years.

We are also indebted to the Bromley Trust for their regular support for our work since the early 1990s. The late Mr. Keith Bromley's faith in the value of our work for the human rights cause has always been a source of inspiration for us. Together with Spunk Fund, Inc. and Spunk Foundation International, the Bromley Trust made possible much of our work, including this book.

We also appreciate Teresa Elwes' kind efforts to promote our work.

Part of our work with earthquake survivors between 2000 and 2003 was supported by CORDAID from the Netherlands. We are indebted to more than 60 colleagues internationally, who contributed to our work over the years. Special thanks are due to Maria Livanou, who made significant contributions to all aspects of our work. Her scientific and executive input as the International Projects Coordinator, together with the diligent work of our colleagues Cvetana Crnobarić, Tanja Frančičković, Enra Suljić, and Dijana Đurić as regional project coordinators and their hard-working teams made high-quality research possible in the difficult post-war circumstances of former Yugoslavia. Thanks are also due to Deniz Kalender and Gönül Acar for their part in running treatment studies with earthquake survivors in difficult post-disaster circumstances and Tamer Aker who contributed to our work with torture and earthquake survivors in Turkey. Special thanks are due to Susan Mineka for her major contribution to the 1992 book on torture regarding the parallels between the experimental models of anxiety/depression and human experience under torture. She provided us with valuable insights into learning theory, which inspired the work in this book. The first author also learned a great deal from Metin Özek and Isaac Marks during many years of work with them. Finally, we are grateful to all survivors of war, torture, and earthquake who participated in our studies and shared their experiences with us.