

JAK POMÓC UZALEŻNIONYM I WSPÓLUZALEŻNIONYM

HOW TO HELP ADDICTS AND CO-ADDICTS

КАК ПОМОЧЬ ЗАВИСИМЫМ И СОЗАВИСИМЫМ



Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych
Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej



Projekt dofinansowany w ramach Programu Partnerstwa Transgranicznego realizowanego przez Wschodnioeuropejskie Centrum Demokratyczne przy wsparciu finansowym udzielonym przez Norwegię ze środków Norweskiego Mechanizmu Finansowego oraz Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych RP

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РЕПОЗИТОРИЙ БГПУ

Materiały pokonferencyjne „Jak pomóc uzależnionym i współuzależnionym” powstały w ramach projektu „Konferencja upowszechniająca działania Programu Partnerstwa Transgranicznego w dziedzinie pomocy uzależnionym i współuzależnionym”

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Organizator:
Organizer:
Организатор:



Partnerzy:
Partners:
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Гомельское
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Materiały projektu zostały przedstawione na trzech konferencjach międzynarodowych.

Zostały opracowane materiały informacyjne dla liderów grup samopomocy prowadzących spotkania z wykorzystaniem filmu wideo o DDA.

Grupa realizująca projekt przygotowuje się do wydania książki.

Implementing the european model of psychological help to ACA in the Republic of Belarus within the project funded by Cross-border Partnership Program

Galina Gatalskaya

Francis Skaryna State University in Homel

Timeliness of the addiction problem in the Republic of Belarus (RB)

Generally speaking, the problem of alcohol addiction/co-addiction is very timely in our country. The dynamics of chronic alcoholism development among the population can be observed.

Presently, according to statistical data from the republican report, there are 180 000 chronic alcoholics, including 33 000 women. Over the last 20 years, the number of women in the general structure of alcoholics has risen by two and a half times. The relation of male to female alcoholics in Belarus is now 4 to 1.

During 2009, 34 578 persons were registered in the record of persons suffering from alcoholism and alcohol psychosis in RB, whereas in 2008 there were 30 869 of them.

According to the RB Ministry of Health, the level of alcoholic beverages consumption per capita grew between 1995 and 2009 from 6.7 to 12.4 liters of pure alcohol. In fact, the country's population consumes even more alcoholic beverages, since the statistics omit hooch and alcohol imported by private people. World Health Organization claims that the indicator of more than 5 liters per capita is a problem for the country.

The statistics quoted above do not give us a clear picture of how many young people, especially university students, are being brought up in dysfunctional alcoholic family and are in need of psychological help.

Therefore, we have conducted a pilot research among university students. The test group of 100 people were young boys and girls studying at economy and psychology departments of the university.

The tool used for the research was a partly structured interview, seeking answers to the following questions:

- Have you ever experienced alcohol abuse in your family?
- Has any of your family members abused alcohol? For how many years?
- Has the family problem been accompanied by physical and psychological violence, divorce, parasitism, etc.?
- How did it affect your life (health, self-esteem, relations with others, etc.)?
- How did you deal with this situation?
- How did this situation influence the relationship with your parents?
- What life decisions did you make that were a result of having experienced this situation?

The research helped clarify that practically one out of two students of the university can be considered an ACA (this statistics is to some extent above average, since more ACA study at psychology department than in other departments).

In general, out of the group of 294 people at the university, 29% (1 out of 3) of the interviewed persons claims that one of their parents is abusing alcohol and 75.5% claims that alcohol is abused by someone from their closest surrounding, e.g. grandmother or grandfather, aunt or uncle, cousin, etc.

The statistics is as follows: in case of 38% students interviewed, their fathers suffer from alcoholism, in 6% – mothers, in 5% – both parents, and in 1% – stepfathers.

As a consequence of parents' alcoholism, in 12% of the cases their children also become addicted to alcohol (brothers/sisters of the interviewees).

One out of ten ACA students being interviewed also attempted drinking at a young age, thus expressing their protest against the parents; 2% attempted suicide; 2% ran away from home.

Besides the parents' alcoholism, we have also analyzed its symptoms in the extended family, including grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle and other relatives. As a result, 23% respondents reported alcoholic uncle, 5% aunt, 14% grandfather, 2% grandmother. Many students have also noticed *family chains*: mother-father-grandmother; father-uncle-grandfather; mother-brother; mother-sister and others.

In 78% families of the respondents whose parents abuse alcohol, family crisis is accompanied by *parasitism* of the drinking person, which aggravates the financial situation in the family. In the case of father's alcoholism, *psychological and physical violence* against other family

members is practically always present. Several respondents have noticed particular *cruelty of the father* during alcohol intoxication, which is represented in attempts to strangle or hang the mother in their presence, as well as the use of cold-steel or firearms. Most ACA consider beatings as regular component of family relations.

More than half ACA respondents feel ashamed, and therefore undervalued, because of their drinking parents.

Every third ACA student notices that parents' alcoholism influenced their relations with other people, which was a result of the necessity to keep the family situation secret.

As a result, many ACA students notice the following in their character: increased fearfulness, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, sense of guilt, shame and fear, secrecy and withdrawal, difficulties with interpersonal relationships (including with the opposite sex), pessimism, imbalance, irritability, being hysterical, etc.

However, 8% of the ACA students claim that as a result of dealing with such family crisis, they have developed the skills and habits of self-defence and defending their close ones in opposition to the alcoholic. 2% have learned to fight their inner fears, care for themselves, support optimism and not look back to the past.

Due to the parents' alcoholism, 6% of the ACA students became orphans before coming of age, through the loss of both father and mother.

As a result of having experienced such situation, almost all respondents claim that they consciously chose life without alcohol abuse, and every sixth of them chose life without alcohol at all. They also point the absence of alcohol abuse as a base criterion of selecting life partner. Such behavior has both pros and cons. Building relationship with a partner based on the criterion of "not drinking" is necessary but not satisfactory, since one's own feelings and ideals need to be taken into account when making the selection, including a larger number of criteria.

Every fourth respondent realizes that they need psychological help but has not gone to a psychologist because of shame for their family.

Answering the question: "What helped you survive the situation of such family crisis?", the respondents answered:

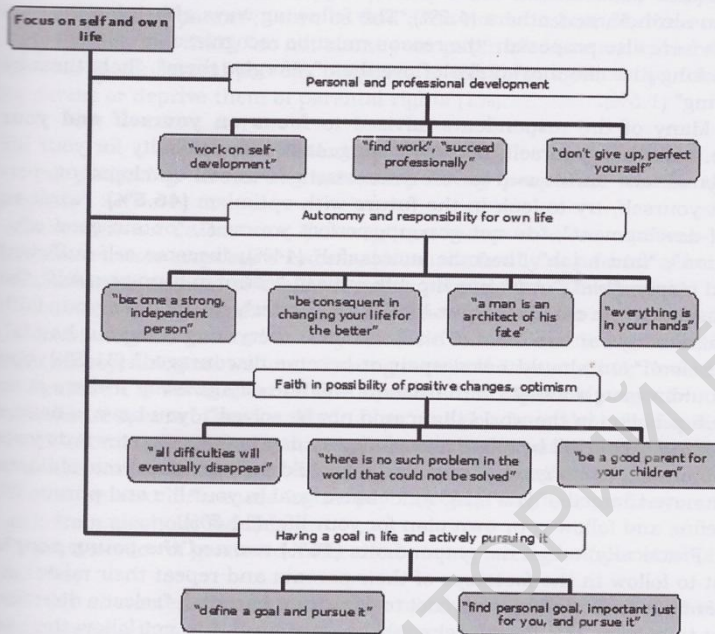
- Support of non-drinking parent, brother/sister, grandmother, grandfather;
- Own effort to break out of the "alcoholic circle" and establish relations in a healthier environment;
- Realizing that I myself am the only person I can count on;
- Aiming for isolation from alcohol abusing parents, distancing oneself from them;
- Cultivating positive emotions ("smile against the circumstances");
- Aiming for separation from family situation through different activities outside of home (music, sports, etc.)

Therefore, the results of the pilot research of a student group show how important it is to organize psychological help to ACA students.

It is necessary to broaden not only individual but also group forms of work: psychological information, psychotherapeutic and corrective groups, psychological consultation groups.

During project implementation, university students were asked: "What would you advise to a young person living in family with a drinking parent?"

The analysis of material took place using the method of meaning categorization.



Based on the qualitative analysis of the work (n=294) we have defined the basic variants of behavior that were advised to children, teenagers and young men growing up in families with a drinking parent.

Most young men and women decided that in the given situation one should try to **help the drinking parent (70.5%)**. 38% advised that you

should not try to deal with the situation yourself but address a specialist (narcologist [*a doctor in Russia specialized in treating drug addiction and toxicomania*], psychologist, police employee, doctor, social educator, call a helpline, etc.) or non-drinking relatives and close persons (19%). Every third person advised to “talk to the parents”, “try to help them”, “convince them that alcohol abuse is bad for their health”, etc. Some proposed that through a positive personal example a parent may be forced to rethink his or her disastrous behavior: “through your own example, you can show that the sickness can be overcome”, “through your example you may convince your parents to lead healthy lifestyle”, “changing yourself and your behavior, you can influence on others”, “perhaps your ‘10’ grade will force them to believe that something in their life is more important than alcohol”, and others (4.5%). The following ways of helping the parents were also proposed: “the reason must be recognized, he did not start drinking just like that” (2.5%), “love them”, “forgive them”, “help them by caring” (1.5%).

Many of the respondents advised to **focus on yourself and your life**, believe in yourself, become strong, take responsibility for your life in your own hands and devote your strength to self-development, perfect yourself, try to look in the future with optimism (**46.5%**): “work on self-development”, “do not give up, perfect yourself”, “obtain good education”, “find a job”, “become successful” (44%); “become self-sufficient and responsible”, “overcome the difficulties”, “count only on yourself”, “be consequent in changing your life for the better”, “strengthen your faith that a man is an architect of his fate”, “that everything is in your hands”, therefore “you should not despair or become discouraged” (31.5%); you should remember that “all hardships will one day go away”, “there is no such problem in the world that could not be solved”, “you have to believe that tomorrow will be a better day”, “every day make a step towards your happiness”, “be a good parent for your children”, “so that your children are not ashamed of you” (14%); “define a goal in your life and pursue it”, “define and follow your own plan for your life” (11.5%).

Practically half of the respondents (**46%**) **warned the young people** not to follow in the footsteps of their parents and repeat their mistakes, therefore they advised them “not to copy their parents”, “select a direction not to become like them”, “choose the right way”, “do not follow the bad example”, etc.

Some proposed to **distance oneself** from the problem and **do** something else (**40%**): do not withdraw, meet with people, spend time with non-drinking relatives and friends (31.5%); distance yourself, find something else to do, find a hobby, work in clubs and sections, become involved in some beneficial “out of home” activity, focus on education, lead healthy lifestyle (32%); “separate yourself” and do not focus on what is happening

in the family (16%), move to your relatives (11%); find a positive example to follow "in literature, life of famous persons or your friends", remember that "among people who have achieved a lot, there are also such, who grew up in families like your own", "start a new life" (7.5%), write a diary (1.5%).

Some respondents also advised to remember the **richness of life** (5%): "enjoy every day", "you have to value your life", "look around and you will see how wonderful the world is", "there are good moments in your life: the sunshine, birds singing, your friends", "if you have a mother or a father, that's good, no matter what they are like".

The following advice was also given: "change your attitude to the problem, reconcile yourself with it" (5.5%); "help those who need it", "support the non-drinking parent"; "turn to God"; "do not be ashamed, there are many families like that", "do not blame your parents". More radical advice was also given: several persons proposed to use force against the drinking parent or deprive them of parental rights (1%).

Scientific work

the following doctoral theses are being prepared within the project:

Алкогольная семья как фактор пролонгированного влияния на психологическое здоровье в юности [Alcoholic family as a factor of long-term influence on mental health of young people] (O.A. Korotkevich)

Влияние опыта переживания семейных кризисов на психологическое благополучие юношей и девушек [The influence of living in family crisis on psychological welfare of young men and women] (N.G. Novak)

Research is conducted within annual and diploma projects:

- Emotional sphere of personality in boys and girls from alcoholic families
- Motivation in selection of spouse in boys and girls from alcoholic families
- Self-esteem of teenagers growing up in alcoholic families
- Gender-related differences in the psychological well being of boys and girls from alcoholic families
- Characteristics of gender identification among teenagers from alcoholic families
- Gender characteristics of personality of boys and girls from alcoholic families as a factor in shaping their life perspectives
- Organizing psychological help for students – Adult Children of Alcoholics
- Characteristics of psychological defense in boys and girls from alcoholic families

As a result of the project 5 **articles have been published in scientific journals:**

- *Психологическая помощь взрослым детям алкоголиков: международный опыт [Psychological help to Adult Children of Alcoholics:*

International assistance], Korotkevich, O.A. in: Проблемы здоровья и экологии, No. 4, 2010, pp.81-84.

- *Полезный обмен опытом* [Useful exchange of experience], Gatalskaya, G.W. and Korotkevich, O.A. in: Высшая школа, No. 5 (79), 2010, pp. 66-67.
- *Психологическое консультирование студентов – взрослых детей алкоголиков* [Psychological consulting to students – Adult Children of Alcoholics], Gatalskaya, G.W. in: Психология, No. 4, 2010, pp. 15-18.
- *Ретроспективный анализ переживания ситуации алкоголизма родителя* [Retrospective analysis of living through situation of parent's alcoholism], Novak, N.G. in: Психология, No. 4, 2010, pp. 19-23
- *Влияние опыта переживания семейных кризисов на психологическое благополучие в юности* [The influence of living in family crisis on psychological welfare at young age], Novak, N.G. in: Клиническая психология и психотерапия, No. 2, 2010, pp. 24-27

Project materials have been presented at three international conferences.

Information materials have been prepared for self-help group leaders conducting meetings utilizing the video on ACA and conducting group psychotherapy.

The group implementing the project is preparing a book publication.