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Strengthening resilience and preserving optimal mental health in grief**Sailaxmi Gandhi**

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Resilience is a process of healthy adaptation when confronted by stressors which could be loss (sudden death, loss of job, financial loss, etc.), trauma or a tragedy. The stressor could be any event that throws one off track and affects the individuals' mental health. The capacity of the individual to bounce back to optimal mental health is resilience. This is not a trait that people are born with but rather consists of behavior, thoughts or actions that could be learned or developed in anyone. Resilience is personal and varies between individuals. Amongst various influencing factors, culture plays an important role. Grief is a process which involves several stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. As one travels through these various stages, the individual's resilience or the capacity to bounce back defines one's mental health. A single case study analysis of one woman's story when struck by a personal tragedy – the sudden shocking demise of the spouse who was otherwise healthy reveals how strongly resilience preserves optimal mental health despite the most acute stressors. Some of the facilitators of resilience were inner reserve of strength, social support in the form of children (who were also in grief), friends, close relatives and neighbors; taking one day at a time (short term goals), trying to establish routine at the earliest, pets who had to be cared for, ceremonies which diverted and kept one occupied (diversion). Some of the barriers were traumatic ceremonies, financial problems, and lack of social support after the initial one week, official procedures, red tapism and attitude to women. This case study emphasizes the importance of inner reserve of strength, social support and diversion as key to preserving mental health and building resilience in the face of trauma. Societal changes which need to occur are doing away with traumatic ceremonies, red tapism and positive attitude to vulnerable women and official procedures that are more user-friendly for women in bereavement.

Biography

Sailaxmi Gandhi is an expert in stress management and psychiatric rehabilitation nursing. She is a Clinical Psychiatric Nursing Consultant as well as an additional Professor in the post-graduate and doctoral program in Psychiatric Nursing, working in an Institute of National Importance of NIMHANS, India. She has been awarded the Best Nursing Teacher Award by the President of India on International Nurses Day in 2014.

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