

Success Story_ from Jaffna

Swarnika is a 43 year old mother of four children from Jaffna and has been educated only until Grade 5. Swarnika had been identified by FRC's Community Volunteer (CV) as a person who will benefit from FRC's services, therefore, she was encouraged to attend FRC's Client Detection Event. She was registered for medical, physiotherapy and counselling sessions as she was observed to be struggling with grief, guilt, fatigue, sadness and body aches.

During the initial counselling sessions, she was observed to be solemn and barely open to sharing her problems. Through rapport building, it was gathered that her husband did trading for a living and her eldest son had left school to do odd jobs to support their living. She had lost her 9 year old daughter to a shelling attack during the war.

Before drawing out a treatment intervention plan, in order to gather an understanding of her family dynamics and home environment, her house was visited. Her house was situated in an area that is surrounded by a lot of people but Swarnika was observed to keep to herself. The Client Intake Form assessment was also done and it was identified that she suffers from grief, guilt, anger, isolation and also neglected her children and herself. She was not interested in activities, did not have an appetite and ruminated about her daughter.

She opened up about how her daughter lost her life. They had been displaced in 2003 and spent five years in the camp due to the war. When residing in Mullivaikkal, her daughter was insistent on wanting to go and play outside and Swarnika gave her consent to do so. A sudden shelling took place, and her daughter passed away on the way to the hospital. The client is further distressed as she could not conduct the last rituals due to the ongoing circumstances.

The PSW empathized with the client and provided a safe place to express her grief. She was encouraged to write a letter to her daughter, to disclose all she couldn't speak about when the daughter was alive. She also shares that her child always wanted them to be a happy family and that she would grow up and take care of the family. It was acknowledged that these feelings that she was experiencing was normal for someone who had lost a loved one. Also, she was given a psychoeducation on grief and its impact.

She was also encouraged to do the last rituals for her daughter in a culturally appropriate manner and the client chose to do a "Pooja" in the temple followed by the giving of alms. She was also encouraged to bring a picture of her daughter to the session where she did a quiet prayer for her child after which she felt a release.

Apart from the grief, the client harbors a lot of guilt, as she sees herself responsible for allowing her daughter out to play, the day she passed away. The guilt was addressed by providing the client with a better understanding of the nature of guilt and working with her to attribute the proportionate amount of guilt to all responsible parties of her daughter's death. Through this, the client was able to understand that she isn't solely responsible for the death of daughter. Upon further discussions on grief, it was normalized that incidents such as these have happened to many people during the war and that what she did was unintentional and what she was feeling is normal in this context.

In most instances, those who have lost their loved ones lack the space to nurture and express their care. In order to address this, and to provide a space for the client to express their care through a plant growing activity. She said that she is planning to plant a tree for every death anniversary of her daughter. Moreover, her responsibilities and duties as a mother and as a

person were identified and she realized that she has been mourning her child but had not given the care and attention to the other people she can give now.

It was identified that she gets angry when her children argue with her or insists that she goes out with them. Ways to cope with anger were explored and a relaxation exercise was taught. This relaxation exercises was urged to be applied before she sleeps as well as she finds it difficult to sleep at night. The impact of lack of sleep and sleep hygiene techniques such as not drinking water before she goes to sleep, using dim light or sleeping in the dark and not sleeping in the afternoon as she tends to take more afternoon naps were explained.

She also had lost a land master during the war and hence was referred to the DS office, as they are providing compensations.

During the last few sessions, it was observed that she had been taking care of herself, engaging back into spiritual activities and more open to sharing events of her life when coming into sessions. Her husband also has joined as a client at FRC (through another PSW) and both of them are able to engage in their daily routines better.

Three follow up visits were done after termination, to see how she has progressed. She was observed to be more welcoming, helping out in community events, spending time with her husband and children and similar observations were reported by the CV.

She also supported in organizing the Forum Theatre performance organized by FRC. She said it was a really good programme and that interventions were given by the community members for the scenarios played. She also has received the land master from the DS office which FRC hired, to transport livelihood goods for the NTT project.