

Identity in the Face of Uncertainty (On the Example of St. Petersburg in Quarantine Mode Caused by a Pandemic)

Solovyova Svetlana Leonidovna*

Doctor of Psychology, Professor, Department of Psychotherapy, Medical Psychology and Sexology, North-Western State Medical University named after I.I.Mechnikov, Ministries of Health of the Russian Federation, Russia

***Corresponding Author:** Solovyova Svetlana Leonidovna, Doctor of Psychology, Professor, Department of Psychotherapy, Medical Psychology and Sexology, North-Western State Medical University named after I.I.Mechnikov, Ministries of Health of the Russian Federation, Russia.

Received: September 16, 2020; **Published:** October 31, 2020

Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of identity transformations, the consequences for the mental and psychosomatic health of a long stay of the population in quarantine conditions, when the volume of social contacts decreases, the degree of freedom decreases, the work schedule changes, and anxiety is growing in connection with the projected job cuts, lower income levels, and unemployment. It is shown that in the absence of a clear sense of identity in conditions of uncertainty, city residents experience a number of negative states, including pessimism, apathy, melancholy, unmotivated hostility, alienation, anxiety, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. In conditions of uncertainty, in the presence of inconsistent, insufficient or incomprehensible regulating and controlling external influences, social norms are eroded or completely lost, they cease to regulate individual behavior. The illusion of reliability and stability of the world as a negotiable partner with whom one can conclude long-term contracts is being lost. At the same time, the importance of intrapersonal problems, untreated mental trauma, and non-integrated life experience is growing. A person encounters his own psychic nature, experiencing feelings of confusion, uncertainty, anxiety and anxiety. Revealed deep personal attitudes and basic beliefs, in accordance with which the behavior of a person is built. The risk of the formation of extreme forms of behavior in the form of religious fanaticism, extremism, tendentiousness and paranoia increases. The main threat to public health appears to be an increase in borderline neuropsychiatric disorders, among which psychosomatic diseases are a significant part. In the case of health care providers, it is safe to assume that there is an increase in detectable signs of PTSD.

Keywords: *Uncertainty; Identity; Health; Neuropsychiatric Disorders*

For several months Russia, like other countries of the world, has been living in a pandemic. In many cities, including St. Petersburg, a regime of self-isolation (high alert, quarantine) has been introduced, when people are forced to stay at home for a long time. At the same time, the volume of social contacts inevitably decreases, the degree of freedom decreases, the schedule, volume and mode of work change. In conditions of a lack of knowledge about the new virus, about the possible consequences of the transferred illness, the level of anxiety is growing. Job cuts, lower incomes and unemployment are forecast. Publications in the media, laws and regulations that are passed do not reduce tension and anxiety. Preliminary observations and practical research related to the provision of psychological assistance to residents of St. Petersburg allow us to make some preliminary generalizations.

In conditions of uncertainty with a lack of information and an unpredictable outcome, an example of which is the current situation in the city, the level of psychological stress and anxiety increases, against the background of which, first of all, the disorders of the cardiovascular

Citation: Solovyova Svetlana Leonidovna. "Identity in the Face of Uncertainty (On the Example of St. Petersburg in Quarantine Mode Caused by a Pandemic)". *EC Psychology and Psychiatry* 9.11 (2020): 59-62.

system are aggravated; we can confidently expect a further increase in the number of hypertensive crises, strokes, heart attacks, especially in middle-aged and elderly people. At present, according to our observations, there has already been a significant increase in the so-called «psychosomatic pathology» - somatic diseases provoked by psychological disorders, first of all, anxiety-depressive circle. The number of somatic and psychological complaints among the population is increasing: sleep disturbances, chronic insomnia, emotional instability with fluctuations in blood pressure, irritability, hostility with an easily arising emotion of anger. Unmotivated impulsive aggression turns against loved ones, destroying intra-family relationships; there is an increase in domestic violence. Many begin to regulate their mental state by taking alcohol and psychotropic drugs.

The main threat to public health appears to be an increase in borderline neuropsychiatric disorders, among which a significant part are psychosomatic diseases of the cardiovascular system and regulatory systems. With regard to health care workers, it is safe to assume that the signs of PTSD that are already being detected are increasing; physical and psychological overload, in particular a 12-hour workday, the need to make decisions, act and be effective in conditions of a lack of information and time, the experience of intense negative emotions due to insufficient security - all this is accompanied by reactions of the type of «denial» and «Withdrawal», detachment and distance, increased emotional stress with unmotivated anxiety, sleep disturbances, irritability, episodic hostility, alcoholism and depressive reactions.

Preliminary observations show that the unprecedented degree of unpredictability of what is happening places increased demands on the adaptive and compensatory capabilities of city residents. The current situation, in addition to more or less pronounced violations of psychological and somatic well-being, reveals accumulated problems, sharpens emerging trends, among which the need to live in conditions of growing uncertainty stands out.

The growing uncertainty has become a condition of existence in a changing world. With the development of society, notes A.G. Asmolv, the «zone of uncertainty» is expanding, requiring a person to be more independent and responsible when making decisions [1]. In domestic science, studies of the phenomenon of uncertainty are based on general psychological patterns, according to which the increase in the degree of uncertainty is associated with an identity crisis: loss of stability, destruction of norms and values that regulate behavior [2]. A person from an independent subject turns into an instrument for realizing the interests of other people or becomes a «decoration» against which the life events of those around him take place. Behavior aimed at achieving a person's own goals becomes problematic, depriving her of a sense of identity.

According to the observations, a long stay in the zone of uncertainty negatively affects the quality of life and health: somatic, mental, psychosomatic. When any biological, psychological or social change occurs, it is necessary to restructure the elements of identity in accordance with the changed situation; destruction of the structure leads to social maladjustment, to negative states, up to depression and suicide [3]. Anxiety, an inevitable attribute of uncertainty, disorganizes a person's mental activity and is accompanied by health disorders, the formation of borderline neuropsychiatric disorders, including psychosomatic symptoms. In the absence of a clear sense of identity, as shown by numerous clinical studies, people experience a number of negative conditions, including pessimism, apathy, longing, undirected anger, impulsivity, alienation, anxiety, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

At the personal level, identity is determined through a person's feeling of his own uniqueness, the uniqueness of his life path [4]. The formation of a new identity, albeit in new, changed conditions, is realized in the implementation of one's own life path, in achieving individually significant goals based on significant values.

Achieving individually meaningful goals based on individually meaningful values implies that these values must be realized, tested in practice and experienced. The motivating force is possessed not so much by the «known» values as by the experienced (affectively charged) values as significant for individual survival. Meanwhile, an individual in conditions of indeterminacy that destroys the usual image of the world has an undifferentiated picture of values, which, as a rule, is uncritically borrowed from significant others (along

with scenarios for their implementation) and therefore is internally contradictory. This value system is usually not fully understood; it periodically evokes a protest when it comes into contact with reality, and when it is implemented in behavior it forms chronic discomfort. Such a mental structure motivates «field behavior» - behavior that is completely determined by a specific social situation, when a person acts as an instrument for realizing the needs of other people. Behavior aimed at achieving the significant goals of a particular person becomes almost impossible, depriving a person of a sense of identity.

Since values are a key factor in the realization and realization of identity, it is they that act as a starting point in the construction of the patient's subjective reality. In the process of socialization, a person, experiencing the influence of different social groups, being exposed to the influence of different reference persons, assimilates certain social norms, prescriptions, restrictions, in accordance with which he builds an individual life scenario. In conditions of uncertainty, with a lack of information, in the presence of inconsistent, insufficient or incomprehensible regulating and controlling external influences, social norms are eroded or completely lost, they cease to regulate individual behavior. Substantial transformations of the internal psychic reality are taking place: basic trust in people and in social structures is lost, the illusion of reliability and stability of the world as a negotiable partner with whom it is possible to conclude long-term contracts is lost. The feeling of helplessness and insecurity is growing [5]. In this case, a person does the only thing that he can do - focuses on his own subjective perceptions, attitudes, preferences. In the subjective psychic reality, fragments of parental scenarios, reference persons, significant others, which were not fully consistent with each other, which were uncritically learned once come to life, increasing psychological stress and provoking spontaneous reactions and impulsive actions. In a situation of external uncertainty, the importance of intrapersonal problems, untreated mental trauma, and non-integrated life experience grows. A person is confronted with his own psychic nature, often experiencing feelings of confusion, insecurity, anxiety and anxiety.

In ordinary life conditions, a person functions in different social roles, experiencing a sense of satisfaction from achieving results and observing instructions and norms. With the growth of uncertainty, a person does not have the possibility of full-fledged self-realization within the framework of the usual role-playing repertoire; the ability to function only in a limited number of social roles remains, which does not bring full satisfaction and pleasure. The background of the mood decreases, the feeling of helplessness and irritation joins the anxiety, which pushes the search for the guilty. A situation of increased readiness for aggression arises. The increase in irritation is also facilitated by the lack of habitual social «stroking» (social support), which we constantly receive from others in normal conditions («Hello», «How are you?», «Glad to see you», «Let's have a coffee?»), providing a sense of involvement in what is happening, involvement in external events, involvement in social networks. A sense of detachment, disconnection from life, the experience of emotional and social deprivation is gradually formed.

Own psychological resources in a situation of uncertainty and expectations with a lack of information and an unpredictable outcome are not enough, and therefore the search for additional points of «support» begins, which are used as various ideological, religious, mental constructions that more or less correspond to the internal psychic reality of the subject. Revealed deep personal attitudes and basic beliefs, in accordance with which the behavior of a person is built. The risk of the formation of extreme forms of behavior in the form of religious fanaticism, extremism, tendentiousness and paranoia increases. Psychological problems are complemented by social ones.

Conclusion

On the basis of the research carried out, it is possible to make some assumptions regarding the content of psychological assistance to the «practically healthy». In the course of an individual history, a person is faced with different situations containing a greater or lesser degree of uncertainty. It can be assumed that passing from one situation to another, a person periodically encounters uncertainty in his microsocial environment, changing accents with respect to those norms that regulate his behavior, turning from time to time to his own psychological nature, when faced with which he finds himself in an intrapersonal crisis, for the solution of which own resources may not

be enough. It is also natural to assume that in this regard, there is its own intrapsychological dynamics, which has a modulating effect on the development of the personality, dynamics that makes it possible to more accurately qualify the mental status and predict the prospects for the development of the personality in its current life situation.

In St. Petersburg, the issue of creating a city psychological service is being resolved, which is extremely relevant not only in a pandemic due to the uncertainty of the current situation and the inability to make a reasonable forecast for the future, but also in connection with general development trends that contain a potential threat. identity. Whatever the picture of the world and the person in it, he is not relieved of responsibility for his own life, for those everyday decisions that he makes. Tolerance to uncertainty as a key integral characteristic of an adapted personality has come to mean the subject's readiness to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty, contradiction, novelty of the situation, incomplete information, and uncertainty of the consequences of choice. Psychological assistance in the formation of a new identity in a changing environment presupposes the creation of new technologies, including the concepts of meaning, oversituational activity and super-tasks.

Bibliography

1. Asmolov. "AG Psychology of the present: challenges of uncertainty, complexity and diversity". *Psychological Research* 8 (2015): 40.
2. Sokolova ET. "Clinical psychology of loss". Ya.M: Smysl, (2015): 895.
3. Kornilova TV., *et al.* "Psychology of uncertainty: the unity of the intellectual and personal potential of a person". Moscow: Smysl (2010): 334.
4. Kostina LA and Kosareva E Yu. "Psychological aspects of the identity of medical workers in the process of professiogenesis (on the model of medical students and therapists)". Publishing house of the Astrakhan State Medical Academy, Astrakhan (2016): 283
5. Solovyova SL. "Basics of psychotherapy for the "practically healthy"". *Medical psychology in Russia: Electronic scientific. Zhurn* (2016).

Volume 9 Issue 11 November 2020

©All rights reserved by Solovyova Svetlana Leonidovna.