



EFPSA Magazine

April 2022 | Issue 6

Crisis Management
Ukraine

Newsletter



- 
- A photograph of a cozy living room. In the center is a brick fireplace with a wooden mantel. On the mantel are a vase of dried flowers, a small white figurine, and a bear figurine. Above the mantel is a round wooden mirror. To the right, a wicker armchair with a cushion and a throw pillow sits on a light-colored wooden floor. To the left, a wicker basket filled with logs sits on the floor. The wall is a light, textured color. A framed picture hangs on the wall to the right.
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Aloha everyone!

First of all, I would like to apologise for this mandate only having two editions of the EFPSA Magazine. We aim to release a Magazine edition every three months with a total of four editions per mandate. However, this mandate was more challenging than originally planned. Our former Creative Writer & Editor, who was head of the EFPSA Magazine, had to resign early on, and I was personally struggling to keep up with the creation of the Magazine. Thankfully, our new Creative Writer & Editor, Hana, was approved in December - still, further challenges throughout the months did not make this process any easier.

Eventually, we found the time and courage to make this second edition for this mandate happen. Concerning the other tasks for the end of the mandate, we decided to not include topics we would originally wish to cover, like showcasing the achievements of our teams in EFPSA, highlighting our Member Organisations or presenting our partnering student organisations. Instead, we will highlight all of the major events that happened in EFPSA and summarise those events, to give you a good picture of what the world was able to see from EFPSA, despite the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Next to that, we would like to set a focus on what is going on in Ukraine. The start of the war has been affecting all of us in EFPSA and we would have felt uneasy to not talk about it in this Magazine. Next to Hana's amazing work on researching the topics of psychological first aid and the impact of war on our mental health, we also showcase what the Advocacy Team has done by creating a collaborative, international database for Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, we will share a list of helplines for psychosocial support throughout Europe, which was created by the Social Impact Initiative. In general, many EFPSA nauts are putting in a lot of personal effort to help out locally in these pressuring times, to all of them we want to show our deepest respect and gratitude.

We hope that this small and different edition can still offer you an overview of what EFPSA has been doing this mandate, as well as some inspirations and insights in these trying times.

Additionally, if you are interested in current calls and open applications to join EFPSA, feel free to subscribe to our new Promotional Newsletter [here](#).

Warm regards,
Robert Meyka



This magazine might be a little bit different to the previous ones. When I joined the amazing EFPSA Office a few months ago, I had some ideas about possible topics I wanted to include in the Magazine. However, life happened and most probably changed the plans or thoughts of many of us. We have not even reached the normal-life mode after COVID-19 and got into new lows of this crazy rollercoaster. Either way, I decided to not stay silent and use this platform to spread hope, support as well as useful information. Therefore, I dedicate my first and last magazine of this mandate to recent events in Ukraine..

The first pages brought to you by Robert. He will welcome you with news, a summary of past events and a reminder that Congress 2022 is almost here! As the new mandate is approaching and applications for the Executive Board are open, you can try out the quiz and find yourself a new position.

If you find the current situation, the ups and lows overwhelming, feel free to get some inspiration from the first psychological aid section or try one of the relaxing methods. I also briefly summarised crisis intervention basics because even an elementary level of knowledge can be very helpful in the lows of our everyday lives as well as special circumstances. Our Magazine ends with an overview of the possible impact of military conflicts on mental health. As depressing as the topic sounds, knowledge gives us the power to help people more effectively and navigate them from their downs to their ups)

Get comfortable, fasten your seat belt and wake up the EFPSA spirit in you because the ride is about to begin!

Sincerely,
Hana Smetanová



What is new in EFPSA

Long time, no newsletter. Can't you keep up with EFPSA's events? Here is a little reminder for you!



Adapting to ‘Living with COVID-19’

As the situation of the COVID-19 has fortunately improved with the implementation of vaccinations all over Europe, the European Federation of Psychology Students’ Associations (EFPSA) has started organising its activities as they were organised before. With Europe opening its borders and becoming more flexible and safe to hold in-person events, we returned to in-person events. Activities, such as our Social Impact campaigns, have also started running normally again. We are happy that we have been able to organise in-person events as well as to adapt them to hybrid events to be more inclusive. Since adapting to hybrid is not an easy task, we are still learning how to make it efficient and inclusive for everyone.

Past Events

First In-Person Board Meeting

Twice a mandate, the Board of EFPSA comes together for about seven days. The programme of this In-Person Board Meeting consists of sessions discussing important matters of the Federation, feedback sessions, brainstorming sessions and teambuilding. These meetings allow the Board to discuss more complex topics and topics that cannot be covered during the weekly online meetings. TAlso, they also allow the Board members to get to know each other more and build on their professional and personal relationships.

The Board of 2021-2022 had their first in-person meeting at the beginning of August in Komen-Waasten, Belgium. Even though the meeting was hybrid due to (as two out of eight Board members joining online were not there in-person), it was possible to discuss many crucial topics and prepare for the upcoming months of our mandate. As part of our team building, we went on a one-day excursion to Bruges and tasted all kinds of Belgian delicacies ('stoofvlees met friet', ate some chocolate, bought Belgian beers, tried both the 'Brusselse-' as well as the 'Luikse wafel', etc.). We enjoyed our trip to the wonderful mediaeval city!

Train the Trainers (TtT) Summer School 2021

At the end of August, 14 psychology students came to Belgium to learn all the do's and don'ts of becoming an EFPSA Trainer. The Train the Trainers (TtT) Summer School is a non-formal education program often designed to equip its participants with the (soft) skills and confidence that non-formal education and experiential learning deem necessary to train others.

Experienced trainers delivered training sessions on several topics to educate the participants on how to construct and lead their training sessions. Participants shared that the event was demanding, challenging them to reflect on their development and skills but at the same time incredibly rewarding. We have seen the exponential growth in each participant and how they are ready for the next step. At the end of the event, the new trainers were ready to deliver their training sessions to psychology students all over Europe. When they have successfully delivered ten hours of training, they will be eligible to apply to become an EFPSA Trainer.

Advocacy August

As the name suggests, EFPSA focused on Advocacy during the month of August. The Advocacy Team took over EFPSA's social media and shared with our students what the word 'advocacy' means and how the team works. The Advocacy Team shared their Policy Papers, introduced their work and educated others on the advocacy process of advocacy.



Mental Health Project

The Mental Health Project is an initiative created by EFPSA during the mandate of 2020–2021. It is an online event in celebration of World Mental Health Awareness Day (10th of October). The project has started with only four participating student organisations but now embodies a collaboration of 11 student organisations from all over the world that together represent nearly 22 million higher education students.

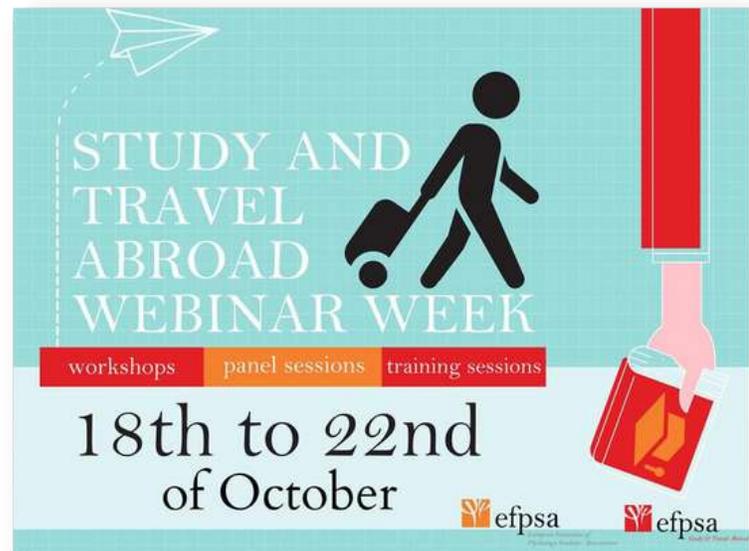
The edition of 2021 was a four-day event with topics on ‘Mental Health Around the World’, ‘Mental Health Today’, ‘First Aid in Mental Health’ and ‘Students & Advocacy’. In total, the event consisted of two panel sessions and 12 workshops for which students from all over the world were able to attend. We look forward to branching out the project even more in future.

EFPSA Week

EFPSA Week was an online 8-day event that took place from the 14th to the 21st of October. There were two time slots per day where. Every Office and Service got a chance to present themselves and their work activities on [YouTube](#) live stream while followers could also ask questions.

Study & Travel Abroad (STA) Webinar Week

Study & Travel Abroad (STA) Webinar Week was an online event, taking place from the 18th to the 22nd of October on Zoom. The event was targeted to students interested in studying abroad. The Webinar Week consisted of panel discussions, namely two EFPSA Alumni Career Path sessions and a panel discussion about studying abroad, as well as two training sessions and a workshop. During the workshop, participants were able to learn how to effectively write a CV while during the training sessions they learned about time management and how to ace a job interview.



EFPSA Day

EFPSA Day takes place in the first week of December. It is a fun day when Member Representatives promote EFPSA on a national and local level. Psychology students got a chance to talk about their EFPSA experience, share information about EFPSA and the upcoming Congress. They also organised many different activities including open training sessions, discussion with Alumni and/or active EFPSA members, and a video made by students of the member organisations with particular topics.

The EFPSA Conference 2021

The EFPSA Conference brings together around 150 students from all over Europe for four days of lectures, workshops and student presentations. The EFPSA Conference took place in Porto, Portugal from the 24th until the 28th of November 2021. The theme of the Conference was ‘Community Psychology: Breaking Walls, Building Bridges’.

The event was highly successful. Several psychology students and professionals put their heads together and discussed various topics about Community Psychology. During each of the sessions, the Advocacy Team of EFPSA and several other volunteers took notes of the most important aspects discussed during the Conference, such as the current state of the field and future directions in Community Psychology. All of these aspects, along with the participants’ input on why and how to contribute to this field are at this moment being gathered into a Call to Action. Our first step is to advocate for a more consistent inclusion of Community Psychology in the European higher education system. We are very enthusiastic to soon share our Call to Action with the rest of the world and show how EFPSA wants to contribute to improving not only the academic setting but also our communities!

Porto





Second In-Person Board Meeting

From the 18th until the 27th of February 2022 in Senj (Croatia), the Board of EFPSA met for a last in-person meeting.

Even though three out of eight Board members joined online, the Board managed to successfully discuss several topics, such as: Finalising the Strategic Planning document for 2023 - 2027, creating a new Office in EFPSA (the Human Resources Office), creating a document that transparently outlines the requirements for receiving the certificate as a volunteer in EFPSA, re-evaluating the role of past Board members, creating a Proceedings Book for the EFPSA Research Programme, drafting an Onboarding Package for new volunteers joining EFPSA and receiving the outcomes of End-Term Evaluations from our Human Resources Responsibles.

Despite facing all different kinds of weather conditions (from heavy winds to sunny days to a literal snowstorm), the Board managed to enjoy their excursion at the beautiful peninsula Krk on a warm sunny day.

Upcoming Events

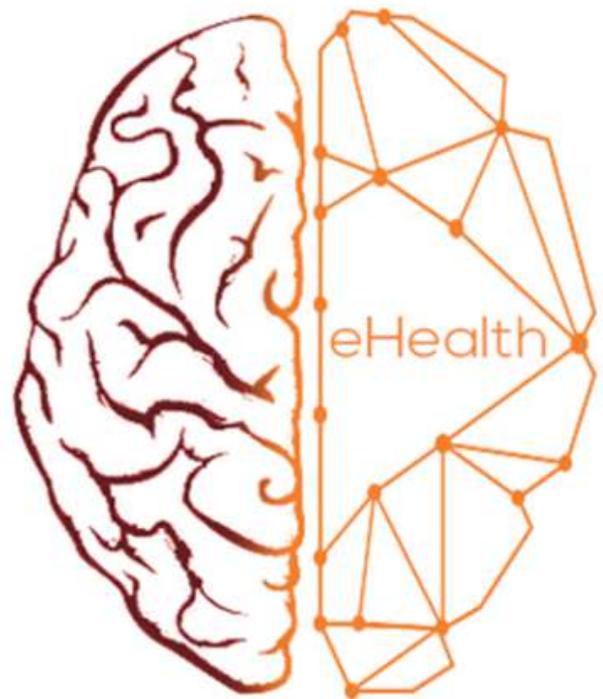
36th EFPSA Congress

EFPSA is delighted to finally organise another in-person Congress from the 11th until the 18th of April in Cyprus! The Congress will host around 250 psychology students from all over Europe and will additionally have the option for participants to join the Congress online.

The topic of this year's Congress is 'E-Health: Taking a Step Towards the Future'. Digitalisation has been becoming part of our daily life over the past century. As a result, new concepts have been developed such as "digital well-being". It is defined as the capacity to look after personal health, safety, relationships and work-life balance in digital settings. With the outbreak of the corona-virus disease worldwide, mental health care institutions are expected to be short of human and financial resources, thereby strengthening the shift in mental health care provision towards e-health in the foreseeable future.

The Congress is crucial for EFPSA as a Federation as it additionally marks the switch of mandates. During the Congress, the Working Community of 2021-2022 will finalise their tasks and the Working Community of 2022-2023 will be elected and commence their work.

More information on EFPSA's Congress can be found on the official Congress [website](#).



36th EFPSA Congress
2022
CYPRUS
TAKING A STEP TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Executive Board

If you are interested in joining forces with EFPSA and putting your efforts into creating these events and projects, we are happy to announce the [Call for the Executive Board 2022-2023](#) for you. Joining the Working Community for a one-year mandate is the best way to contribute to the improvement of our Federation, and during this experience, you will be able to develop yourself a lot, as well! The call for **Coordinators** will end on the 9th of April (23:59 CEST), the call for **Responsibles** on the 10th of April (23:59 CEST) and the call for **Team Members** on the 12th of April (20:00 CEST). This way, people who apply as a Coordinator and do not get selected, can still apply for other positions. Moreover, even if people are unsure of applying or want to experience the Congress and the new Board elect first, they still have time until the evening of the first day of Congress to apply for a Team Member position.

Additionally, there is a whole new team and new positions in which you can make an impact: The new team, the **Human Resources Office (HRO)** will consist of five positions, including a Human Resources Coordinator, two Human Resources Responsibles, one Coaching & Mediation Responsible and one Community Responsible. The purpose of the HRO will be to oversee, manage and evaluate working practices of the Working Community aiming to develop the Federation and its members professionally and individually.

The new position of **Project Responsible for (A)live!** was created within the Social Impact Initiative team to take over the new (A)live! Campaign focused on suicide prevention and bring it to a whole new level

Lastly, the **Training Office Team Member** will be the first position within the Training Office that does not have the requirement of being an EFPSA Trainer to apply. This way, new people who are interested in training can work to improve the EFPSA Training system and bring our Trainers' Community closer together while getting more in touch with their interests in training.

Not sure yet for which position you should apply? Do not despair! We updated the little Executive Board Quiz from last year - here you can just answer short questions and find out which position might suit you the most. Do not forget to read through the Role Descriptions of your position of interest and consider consulting with the current position holder about how their mandate looked like. With all of this, you can be sure that your application and your mandate will have a promising start!

TAKE THE QUIZ!



I love guiding and motivating a team.

*Hell yeah, hums *follow the leader, leader, leader**

Nah, I'm more like the fun team member or the independent boss babe.
- Go to page 37 -

Numbers make me...

...interested, but only in combination with a social aspect.

...go into ecstasy.
1

The core of my work should be scientific.

...almost uncomfortable.

Yes, I'm like a pig in the mud when it comes to research!
2

No, I would rather work on more practical matters.
3

I wish I could give everyone in the world...

...the potential to fully develop themselves.
4

...enriching travel experiences.
5

...the tools to sustain a healthy mind.
6

My friends would describe me as...

...a social butterfly.
- Go to page 38 -

...a creative mind.

...an efficient organiser.

*I can create an image to represent
you in a favorable way.*

7

Spreadsheets!

11

You want to organise your life
to get a good overview. What
format do you choose?

The world is ending and you
meet this guy named Noah. He
tells you that the ship can only
take in passengers that can
provide useful services. What do
you say?

*Some nice
Wordclouds.*

12

Visual plots and tables.

13

*I can make the registration process
for the animals easier by creating
a web presence for the arc.*

10

*I can capture and preserve the
unfolding events for eternity.*

8

*I can tell stories that raise spirits
and open up new perspectives.*

9

*...plant seeds and work with
people towards personal growth*

14

*...work towards a psychologically aware
society by educating the next generations*

15

You find a magic lamp and rub it. A genie pops out and offers
you the job of your dreams. You answer: "I want to..."

*...the potential to fully
develop themselves.*

16

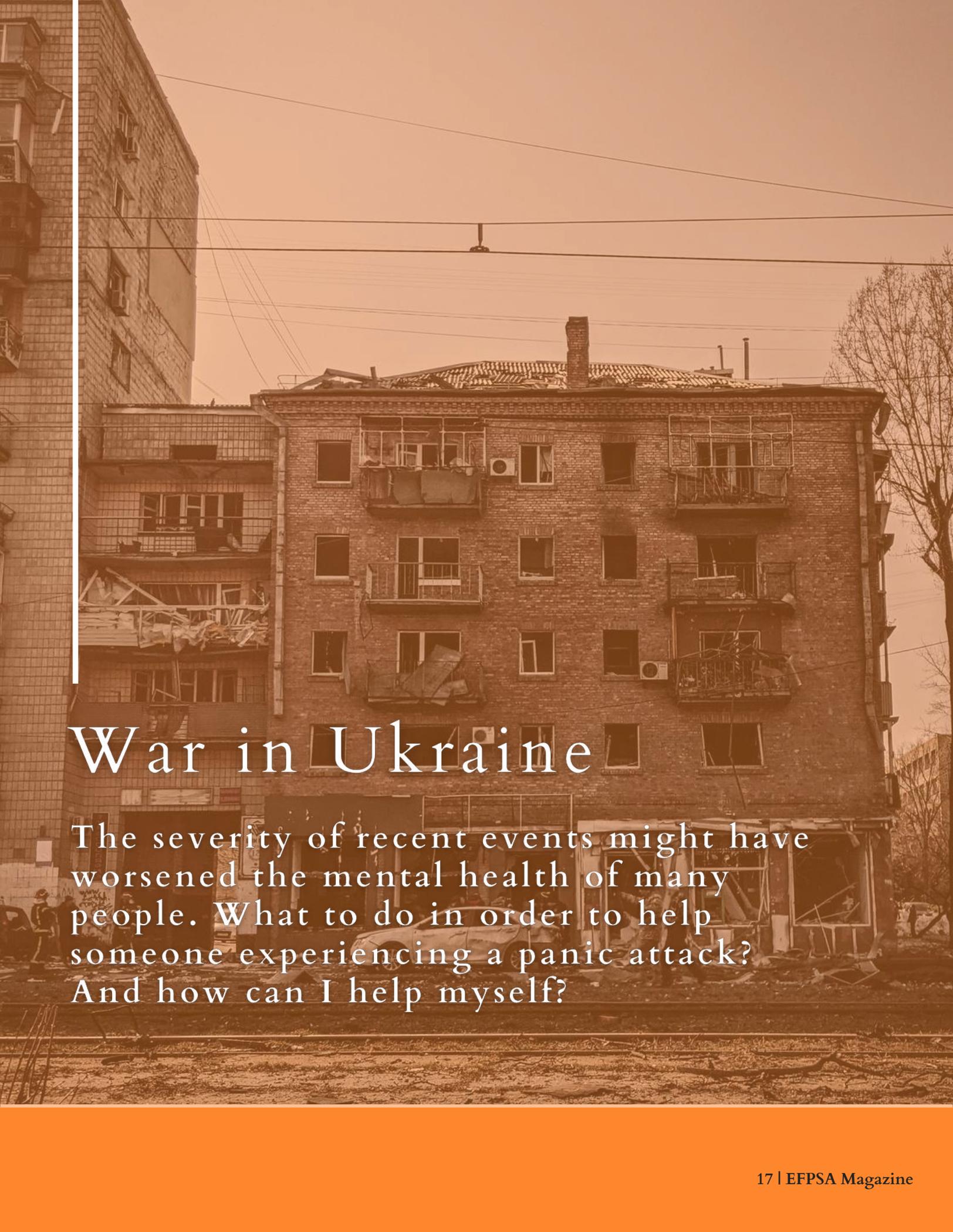
*...the tools to sustain a
healthy mind.*

18

...enriching travel experiences.

17

- 1 Grants Coordinator, Partnership Coordinator
- 2 Advocacy Coordinator, JEPS Editor-in-Chief, JEPS Senior Editor, Research Programme Coordinator
- 3 Member & Observer Coordinator, Events Coordinator, Training Events Coordinator
- 4 Training Office Coordinator, Human Resources Coordinator
- 5 Study & Travel Abroad Coordinator
- 6 Social Impact Initiative Coordinator
- 7 Social Media Responsible, Social Media Team Member, RP Team Member, STA Team Member, Training Image Responsible, Training Office Team Member
- 8 Videographer
- 9 Creative Writer & Editor
- 10 Web Support Coordinator, Designer
- 11 Fundraising Responsible, Accounting & Budgeting Responsible, Grants Responsible, Grants Team Member
- 12 JEPS Editor, Events Team Member, Advocacy Writer, Content Review Responsible
- 13 Data Analysis Responsible
- 14 **Human Resources Office:** Human Resources Responsible, Coaching & Mediation Responsible, Community Responsible
Training Office: Training Events Responsible, Internal Training Responsible, Trainers' Community Responsible, External Training Responsible
- 15 **Social Impact Initiative (SII):** SII Team Member, Project Responsible (BT, MtM, OAK, (A)live!)
- 16 **Study & Travel Abroad (STA):** STA Team Member, Study Abroad Responsible, Travel Network Responsible, EFPSA Exchanges Responsible, Internship Responsible
- 17 **Research Programme (RP):** Research Responsible, RP Team Member
Journal of European Psychology Students (JEPS): JEPS Editor
- 18 External Relations Coordinator, External Relations Team Member, Public Relations Coordinator, Partnership Team Member, Member Office Team Member



War in Ukraine

The severity of recent events might have worsened the mental health of many people. What to do in order to help someone experiencing a panic attack? And how can I help myself?

Psychological First Aid

In recent weeks, we are witnessing events in Ukraine, and many are trying to offer a helping hand. Especially as psychology students, we might feel the urge to help, although we have to look out for the signs of being overwhelmed with the severity of the situation. However, as we all know, to help others, we have to take care of ourselves first.

Here is a list of what we can do to feel better.

Psychological first aid for yourself

In our social media era, we sometimes forget that being happy and on cloud 9 is not constant. In fact, it is okay not to feel okay all the time. We can have an overall meaningful and fulfilling life while allowing ourselves to feel bad at times. We do not owe anyone a smile. Suppressing emotions does not help, sometimes admitting that it sucks can be the best way to feel better.

Constant updating of social media and keeping up with the news can be harmful, especially when the majority of news is not good. It is crucial to set boundaries and give ourselves space. For me, watching the news three times a day is enough. In case this situation is particularly difficult for you, feel free not to check social media or watch TV, put your own well-being first. You will not miss the most important news anyways. In case you do not mind checking the news, always choose a reliable source that will not make you more stressed.

Discussing the situation with friends and some family members can reduce the overwhelming weight of the situation. Sharing our concerns is a good way to relieve ourselves and maybe see a different perspective from our friends' point of view.

If you feel like the anxiety and hopelessness have crossed the line, do not hesitate to find help for yourself. Talking to a professional can be very relieving or helpful in the long run.

Feeling the injustice, the pain of the families of victims and possible guilt can be unbearable. However, with the opportunities and knowledge of psychology students, we can make a difference in the lives of people that are not that lucky. Participating in volunteering, helping with crisis intervention (when having the required training) or looking after children is beneficial. Furthermore, this is a reminder not to feel bad about having opportunities as we can use them for the greater good.



How to help Ukraine

If you have the capacity to directly help people affected with the crisis but you do not know how, you might find the database created by EFPSA helpful! Click [here](#) to open the document.

Ukrainian people can be easily found all around Europe, therefore ribbons with the flag colours, flags, demonstrations or any manifestation of support are not only symbolic but appreciated. Showing support for Ukraine is one of many kinds of help we can offer.

If you have crisis intervention training, your knowledge and skills can be serviceable. There are many volunteering opportunities available, especially organised by universities.

Pointing a finger at Russian citizens may be very common at this time but very harmful. We have to remind ourselves that collective guilt has never solved any problems. In addition, the government and its decisions do not always reflect the general opinion of its citizens.

Psychological first aid for others | Crisis intervention basics

Training is needed for becoming a professional in crisis intervention. However, some basics and principles can be useful not only related to the war issue but also in everyday life. Psychological crises are different and dependent on context, therefore I tried to summarise the most basic tips on how to help a person when in an acute state of crisis.

Safety

As mentioned above, the context of a crisis is crucial but safety should be a priority in all cases. So, when talking to someone (via phone or when we see physical signs of distress), it is necessary to first check if the person is physically safe and their life is not threatened. Make sure the person is at a safe spot where you can talk without distractions (if possible).

Voice

When talking to someone while they are experiencing a panic attack and hyperventilation, is upset and screaming, try to talk to them in a slow, quieter voice. On the other hand, if the person is showing signs of low energy, depression and is rather lethargic, try to talk more energetically and a tiny bit louder to cheer them up a little. Voice modulation depends on the person we are talking to and we can use it as a tool to either calm them down or stimulate them.

“...Hmm”

If the person needs to talk a lot, let them know you are listening to them by “hmm”. This tip might seem very simple but it is useful. If the speech is rather disorganised, recapitulating what the person said might be very helpful for both of you. If we want to make the person more active in a dialogue, we can ask them additional questions or repeat what they said and ask if we understood it correctly.

Emotions

This part is contextual and depends on the person's emotional state. Either way, you should encourage them to express their emotions. If they are in a calmer state, you can ask them about how they feel. Validating their emotions and giving them understanding is a crucial part of crisis intervention. Verbalising the emotions that you think the person might be feeling at the moment can also help for both of you to understand the emotional state of the person, e.g. “I can hear you sound upset...”

Psychosocial Network

When going deeper and analysing a complex problem, you should ask about psychosocial networks – who can help if it is a long term problem. Who does the person trust in their surroundings? Is there someone who also experienced a similar situation? How did they solve it? If there is no one to trust on a particular issue, can the school or workplace help? If not, the end of the psychosocial network is rather institutional – no matter what the problem is, there is probably an organisation taking care of this topic out there.



Databases in Europe

General helplines around Europe

- This database was created by Social Impact Initiative for their (A)live! Campaign about suicide prevention. It is one of the databases available, another database is to be found [here](#).

Flexibility

When doing crisis intervention, it is about the person. You should not seek information to satisfy your curiosity, you should not talk about yourselves. Therefore, you should adjust to the person's needs, if the person wants to talk – let them talk, if they want to be quiet, let the person know you are there for them, stay in silence and coexist with them.

Updating

When talking to someone in crisis, the priority is stabilisation. By checking if the person feels safe, if they feel better, we prevent them from spiralling into negative emotions and thoughts.

Therapy

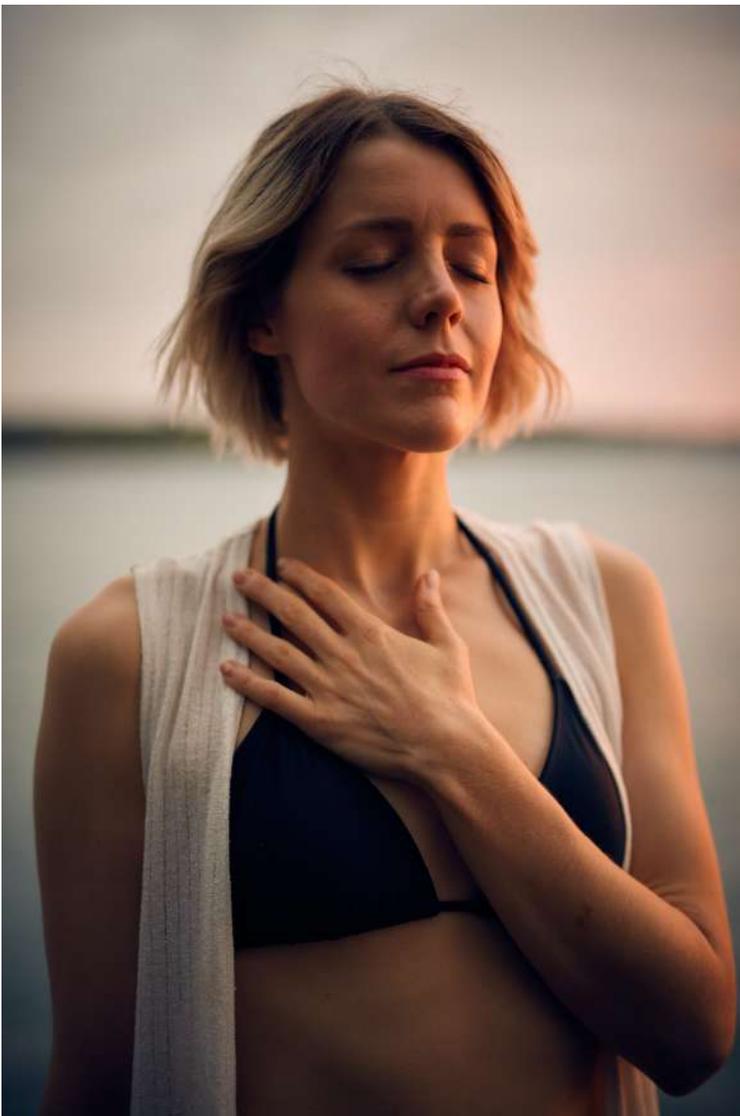
Last but not least, crisis intervention is not a substitute for therapy. When having trauma or a long-lasting problem, crisis intervention is not the solution. By supporting the person to seek psychological help or therapy, we are destigmatising mental health problems and encouraging the person for a greater change or finding better coping mechanisms.

Anxiety reducing methods

These days, mindfulness and relaxation methods are part of the daily life of many people. However, I feel like it is important to mention them as they can be beneficial either for us or for others to calm them down. The tips listed below are some of my favourites and easy.

5-4-3-2-1 Method

This simple grounding method, which is also used in cognitive behavioural therapy, is effective when experiencing anxiety. The principle consists of shifting focus on different elements, therefore, shifting the focus on the present moment. If someone is in acute fight-flight response, try giving them instructions about their surroundings as listed below.



▶ Name 5 things you can **see** around you

▶ Name 4 things you can **touch**

▶ Name 3 things you can **hear**

▶ Name 2 things you can **smell**

If there is no object to smell, imagine walking in the park or going to a different room (e.g. kitchen, bathroom)

▶ Name 1 thing you can **taste**

Even on your tongue - what did you eat today?

Breathing: 4-7-8 method

There are plenty of methods that focus on breathing but here I am presenting you with the 4-7-8 method.

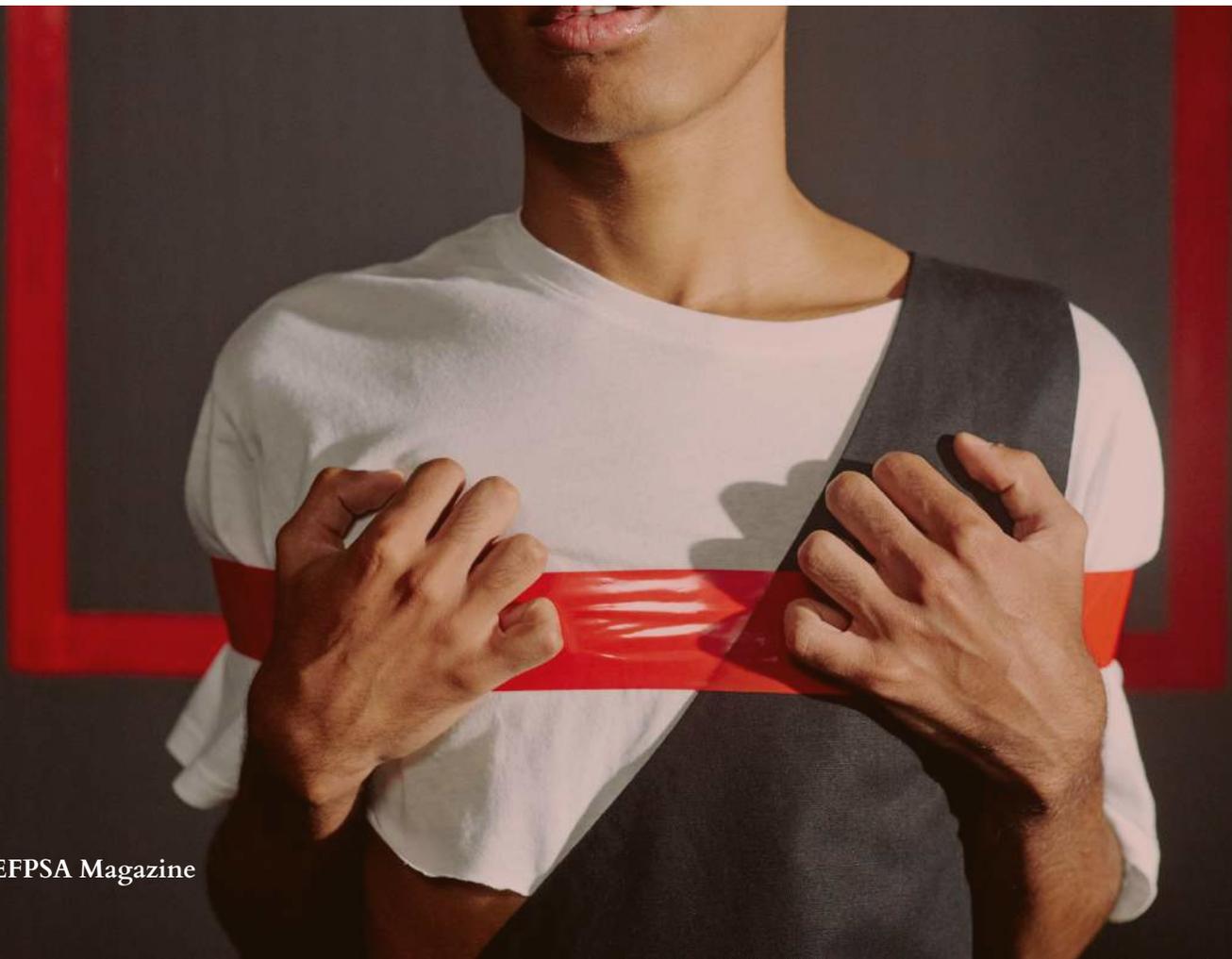
Tell the person to empty their lungs with a big exhale. Then breathe in through their nose for 4 seconds. Count to 7 when holding your breath and then exhale forcefully for 8 seconds through your mouth.

Stomping on the ground

When someone is in huge distress, reassurance about their security is crucial. When focusing on the feet, on the ground beneath, we shift our focus to the outside world, away from the inner panic. Instructions such as: “There is a solid ground under your feet, try to stomp on it. The ground is stable, you are safe.” can be calming for someone experiencing a panic attack.

Release extra energy

In acute situations, some people can feel an overload of energy caused by adrenaline. They might start to pace around and even scream. Make sure the person is safe but because they need to release the tension, do not stop their expressions of distress. Antistress ball or even simple tearing of paper can be very helpful.



Emotion Aid

This famous and complex method based on the somatic experiencing therapeutic approach is not only efficient in acute situations but also in daily life as prevention. I will briefly summarise the method and its basics. Feel free to skip or repeat some steps to make it work for you.

Step 1: The butterfly tap

Cross your arm and put your palms right below your shoulders as if you want to hug yourself. Alternately tap with your right palm on your left arm and then with your left palm on your left arm and repeat 25 times.

Step 2: Basic grounding

When grounding and noticing the support of the ground under your feet, slowly look from one corner of the room/surrounding to the other. When slowly moving your head, try to find 10 different objects of the same colour, then 10 objects of a different shape.

Step 3: Self-soothing and regulation

Put one hand on your stomach and the second one on your chest. Breathe and try to feel how both the stomach and chest are rising and going down again.

Step 4: Discharge

Try to notice one thing at a time and be purely curious, not judging. You might experience spontaneous release and calmness.

Step 5: Sources

Think about something or someone that makes you feel loved or peaceful. Notice how relaxed you feel.



Impact of war on mental health

I think most can agree that life can be stressful sometimes. Heritage from our ancestors aka acute stress reaction aka fight-flight-freeze reaction is already well-described and recognised. During everyday lives, we acknowledge that stressful occasions will eventually fade away. However, war does not have a certain ending planned. The ongoing catastrophe leads me to a big question that could be crucial for us future psychologists. How does severe stress in a form of war and humanitarian crisis influence people's lives?

War leads to emotional suffering in various forms. Death, family separation, the loss of home and perception of future, social deprivation, as well as sexual aggression can have consequences in so-called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

However, it is not easy to describe the universal response to a war conflict. It was the difference between descriptions of psychological symptoms among officers and soldiers in previous wars that showed us the new forms of stress reaction. War violence and consequences cannot be easily divided into physical and psychological as both of the elements affect each other. Somatic problems, being physical responses to stress, are often described as feelings of discomfort in the stomach, fatigue, headaches or unspecified pain. Physical injury has its psychological consequences and trauma impacts the individual's physical system. Therefore, a holistic approach is a necessary component of the recovery process. Additionally, the bigger the exposure to traumatic events on both physical and psychological levels, the more pronounced the symptoms are.



Many studies from different countries focused on describing psychological aspects of war. A summary of some interesting data from various studies can be found below.

Afghanistan (Cardozo et al., 2004)

The national population-based mental health survey used in this study collected data from 799 adult household members that were more than 15 years old. The aim of this study was to provide national estimates of mental health status of the disabled and nondisabled population.

- 67,7 % of respondents suffered from symptoms of depression.
- 72,2 % of respondents suffered from symptoms of anxiety.
- 42 % of respondents suffered from symptoms of PTSD.
- There was a significant relationship between mental health status and traumatic events.

Balkan-Serbian ethnic minority in Kosovo

The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of undernutrition in the population of Serbian elderly aged more than 60 as well as the psychiatric morbidity among the adult population in Kosovo. Results mentioned below were a part of the mental health section of the study.

- Social dysfunction and severe depression were high among women, people living alone or small families (Salama et al., 2000).
- Post-traumatic symptoms in children aged 9-14 were high and related to the amount and type of exposure (Smith et al., 2002).

Lebanon (Macksoud, 1996)

Findings mentioned below were the outcome of interviews with 224 Lebanese children aged 10-16. The number and types of their war traumas were examined in this study as well as the relation of traumatic experiences to their psychosocial development.

- Correlation between mother's distress and child's mental health was found. In children, the perceived severity of war was dependent on the depressive tendencies of mothers, therefore, the mental state of the mother was discovered to be the best predictor of a child's present or future mental state.

Palestine (Mousa & Madi, 2003)

This study was organised by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The research was focused on Palestinian perceptions of their living conditions during the Second Intifada.

- 46 % of parents reported aggressive behaviour of their children
- 38% of parents reported bad school performance
- 27 % of parents reported bed wetting
- 29 % of parents reported their children suffered from nightmares
- Interesting finding was that refugee children (53%) were more likely to behave aggressively in the study than non-refugee children (41%). Possible influences mentioned were shooting, violence on TV, confinement at home or arrest and beating of relatives and neighbours.

When being in contact with people directly affected by war, it is important to be mindful of the cultural differences. Discours around mental health in western countries might be different from other parts of the world; for example people from developing countries may be very confused by psychological examinations.

Early intervention might be valuable, however, labelling someone as “traumatised” could be harmful for various reasons. It is important not to confuse normal distress with a psychological disorder. This mistake might lead to making psychologically “healthy” people passive and take their initiative away. Experience from previous wars claims that when citizens are only the receivers of help, the process of reconstruction is slower on every level possible.



PTSD

Not every person with war experience develops post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) however, the rate of cases is higher. In the past, this syndrome was also called “war neurosis” or “survivor syndrome”. Being psychology students, our objective is not to diagnose someone but recognise possible symptoms and recommend the help of a professional if possible.

According to DSM-5, to diagnose PTSD, exposure to a traumatic event is required. Not all stressful occasions involve trauma as trauma is defined as “actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence”. However, individuals can also be traumatised when finding out about traumatic events that happened to their beloved ones. Intrusion symptoms are symptoms B that include nightmares or flashbacks. To diagnose PTSD, avoidance criteria must be found, for example in a form of avoiding trauma-related places. With criterion D, victims of trauma with PTSD suffer from negative alterations in cognition and mood such as feeling isolated and decreased interest in activities. The last criterion I want to mention are alterations in arousal and reactivity. Individuals can express their destructive behaviour, aggression or can suffer from amnesia.

Development of psychiatric illness is more likely if the person affected was vulnerable even before the war. It was shown that women are more affected than men but children, the disabled and the elderly are affected even more. What is more, some studies suggest that the younger the victim, the higher the risk of psychological problems. However, response to the trauma is not universal and it is important to have the children’s background in mind. For example, good support of a social system is a protective factor contrary to being separated from parents. As attachment and closeness to a caregiver are protective factors in minors, they can help to cope with the stress of the situation. Avoiding talking about war is not very effective and could lead to problems in future. The answers should be suitable for the age of the child, however, explanation and reassurance is very important.

However, it would be rather reductionistic to say that everyone influenced by war is going to develop mental disorders. As always, risk and protective factors can be found. The sense of community, mutual support and family are some of the protective factors when it comes to the crisis that war is.

In addition, I would like to mention four aspects of healing after colonial violence that I have found in the book *The psychological impact of war*. These particular tips are rather focused on the cultural and societal aspects. They were published more than 20 years ago, however, I still find them valuable and as a good guide when talking to war survivors.

Four aspects of healing after colonial violence

1. The core of the first aspect lies in the acknowledgement of the damage and trauma. When talking about sad events, the narrative process is helpful in the integration of events with emotions and reevaluating what happened.
2. Secondly, resources from past healing might lead to a better healing process. If there was some catastrophe that happened earlier in that society, ancestral teachings and previous coping mechanisms (even traditions) can be very beneficial for citizens suffering in presence.
3. The third aspect is reaching out to other members of the social group. Sharing experiences and confronting oppression together makes the voice of the community more powerful. When having psychological trauma, people engage with it in a social way.
4. Lastly, reconstruction of the community. Sad events can lead to a change of values and spirituality that can affect the social cohesivity of the community after a catastrophic event.

To sum up, it has been scientifically proven that psychological and physical support results in minimising war-related consequences. Therefore, we know a helping hand from each of us is very important :)

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Thank you for reading



EFPSA Magazine

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So, you have made it to the last page of this Magazine. We hope you enjoyed going through its pages and found the information helpful. Special thanks to Katja, Seray and Max whose contribution was crucial.

We also do not want to miss the opportunity of appreciating our beautiful EFPSA community. Thank you for all the work you have made throughout your mandate!

Feel free to contact me with any feedback, questions, complaints, ideas or proposals for future issues. Your input will be greatly appreciated!

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