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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Psychology of Resilience: How to Maintain Mental Health during War?

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Abstract

Background and Aim of Study: *The war in Ukraine is one of the most powerful stressors that disrupts the basic sense of security, stability, and predictability of citizens' lives. It is accompanied by chronic anxiety, fear, loss, uncertainty, and information overload, and negatively affects mental health. An important method of maintaining mental health and overcoming difficulties during war is the development of psychological resilience.*
The aim of the study: to clarify the concept of psychological resilience and identify basic strategies for maintaining mental health during war.

Conclusions: *Psychological resilience is a complex, multi-level construct that ensures the absence of suffering, the ability to adapt and recover after difficult trials. Effective strategies for maintaining mental health include meeting basic needs, using adaptive coping strategies, physical activity, and accessing professional psychotherapy/psychological help for persistent/severe symptoms.*

Keywords: *psychological resilience, mental health, coping strategies, psychotherapy, basic needs*

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Dear Editor,

The war in Ukraine creates multi-level threats (physical, economic, social, and identity) and negatively affects the physical and mental health of citizens. Moreover, despite their significant prevalence, the psychological consequences remain much less noticeable to society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2025), since the beginning of the war, 68.0% of respondents reported a deterioration in their mental health, mainly.

Why do some people break down under the pressure of circumstances, while others not only maintain their mental balance, but also emerge from difficulties even stronger? The answer to this question is the central object of study of the psychology of resilience.

The concept of psychological resilience was introduced into scientific circulation by Antonovsky (1979) in the theory of sense of coherence, where resilience is explained as a global personality trait that includes clarity, manageability, and meaningfulness. Current research has established that resilience is an individual's ability to adapt positively in the face of significant threats, difficulties, or trauma (Pypenko et al., 2025). Two components are key in this definition: firstly, the presence of real risk or adverse life conditions; secondly, positive adaptation despite these conditions. This is what distinguishes resilience from the simple absence of stress or chance. Jo et al. (2024) emphasize that psychological resilience is primarily flexibility, not rigid strength. It allows you to adapt to stress, recover from crises, and

change your behavior in response to circumstances, while remaining true to your values. Therefore, psychological resilience is not only the absence of suffering, but also the ability to adapt and recover from difficult trials.

Recent research has identified effective strategies and interventions with a convincing evidence base for maintaining mental health and developing psychological resilience:

- *Strategy of meeting basic needs* – physical safety, sleep and nutrition are the basis of mental stability. This also includes information, social support, and practical and medical-psychological assistance, if necessary (Stadnik et al., 2025).
- *Adaptive coping strategies* – problem-oriented actions (Shabahang et al., 2026); positive reassessment (Bonanno et al., 2011); finding social support (Ozbay et al., 2011); emotional self-regulation (Sotiriadis & Galanakis, 2022); physical activity: aerobic, aquatic, physical exercises, etc. (Ozkara et al., 2016).
- *Strategy of physical activity* – aerobic, aquatic, physical exercises, etc. (Ozkara et al., 2016); physical cultural and healthy work, wellness and health-promoting activities aimed at forming individual's health culture (Melnyk, 2019).
- *Strategy of psychotherapy* – cognitive behavioral therapy: identifying cognitive distortions, working with automatic thoughts (Sapmaz, 2023); mindfulness-based stress reduction: mindfulness-based stress reduction, meditation, breathing practices (Nila et al., 2016); speech therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy: identification of personal values (Moens et al., 2022); dialectical behavior therapy: self-compassion techniques (Aghili & Farhang, 2022).

Therefore, based on the analysis of scientific literature, the following recommendations can be formulated for maintaining mental health and developing psychological resilience during war:

1. Meeting basic needs is the basis of mental stability. Feelings of danger, lack of sleep, deterioration of water and food quality lead to chronic stress, anxiety, exhaustion, somatic/infectious diseases.

Therefore, during war, everyone should prioritize personal safety, sleep 7–8 hours, maintain a daily routine, and consume a variety of safe (plant and animal) foods and clean water in sufficient quantities (2.5–3 liters per day). It is also necessary to take care of information hygiene, social connections (telephone numbers of emergency services, relatives, acquaintances), and medical and psychological (if necessary) assistance (Pypenko et al., 2020). Information hygiene includes using reliable sources of information and avoiding excessive immersion in the news, which helps to maintain contact with reality, mental balance and a sense of control over the situation

2. Using adaptive coping strategies occurs through such psychological techniques as problem-oriented actions, positive reappraisal of the situation, search for social support, emotional self-regulation, etc. Problem-oriented actions aim to prepare for solving current and distant problems, suppress unnecessary actions, and consciously search for necessary information (Melnyk et al., 2024). Problem-focused strategies work best when the stressor can be controlled or changed.

Positive reappraisal includes techniques such as perceiving stress as an experience/challenge, finding the positive in a difficult situation, and shifting attention from helplessness to finding meaning. This strategy is often used in conjunction with problem-solving planning and is a sign of high resilience (Mykhaylyshyn et al., 2024).

Seeking social support involves reaching out to friends, family, or professionals for help. Talking to a loved one, supporting neighbours, volunteering, and connecting with friends or colleagues can help reduce feelings of isolation and help a person feel less alone with their problems. In times of war, it is especially important not to withdraw into oneself and not to be ashamed to ask for support.

Emotional self-regulation is achieved through hobbies, creativity, meditation, humor, spiritual (value of life), and religious guidelines.

3. Physical activity is the foundation of mental stability, as it directly affects brain function, emotion regulation, and the body's stress tolerance. According to WHO recommendations, to maintain mental health, adults need at least 150 minutes of moderate (brisk walking, swimming, dancing) or 75 minutes of high-intensity (running, active sports) exercise per week (WHO, 2024). This reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety and improves the overall psycho-emotional state of a person.

In the presence of long-term (more than 3-6 months) maladaptive mental states and pathological symptoms, it is recommended to seek help from a specialist – psychologist/psychotherapist (Stadnik et al., 2023).

Conclusions

Thus, psychological resilience is a complex, multi-level construct that ensures the absence of suffering, the ability to adapt and recover from difficult trials. During war, mental health care is not a luxury, but a condition of survival. Effective strategies for maintaining mental health include meeting basic needs, using adaptive coping strategies, physical activity, and access to professional psychotherapeutic/psychological help for persistent/severe symptoms.

Ethical Approval

The study protocol was consistent with the ethical guidelines of the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki as reflected in a prior approval by the Institution's Human Research Committee.

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Conflicts of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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