

***Shumeiko Tetiana,***

*Doct. Sci. (Law), Leading Researcher of Research Lab of the Problems of Management of Law Enforcement Activities and Their Psychological Support, Educational-Scientific Institute of Postgraduate Education, National Academy of Internal Affairs*

## **STRATEGIES OF PROFESSIONAL SELF-PRESERVATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS WORKING WITH WAR TRAUMA**

In the context of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, psychologists in the security and defense sector are facing an unprecedented level of professional workload, acting as the main tool for stabilizing the mental state of servicemen and their family members. Work with war trauma, which includes experiences of loss, torture, captivity, and extreme stress factors, causes specialists to experience intense negative emotional reactions. The lack of clearly established psychological protection mechanisms leads to the development of secondary traumatization, emotional exhaustion, and professional deformation, which not only negatively affects the psychologist's personality but also results in the loss of qualified personnel.

As of today, the professional self-preservation of a psychologist should be considered not as a personal choice of the specialist, but as a strategic component of the mental health system of the entire defense sector. The effectiveness of providing psychological assistance directly depends on the specialist's ability to maintain their own resilience and restore internal resources. The search for and implementation of effective self-preservation strategies is a necessary condition for forming a sustainable system of psychosocial support, which is capable of functioning in a prolonged high-intensity conflict mode and providing quality rehabilitation for Ukraine's defenders.

One of the key strategies for professional self-preservation should be considered the formation and maintenance of psychological resilience. The latter should be viewed as the ability to effectively adapt to stressful conditions, restore internal balance, and maintain functionality in situations of increased emotional tension [1]. In our opinion, a psychologist's resilience should be based on the development of their own emotional reactions, the ability to reflect, and flexibility in choosing coping strategies. In this aspect, the practice of self-observation becomes particularly important, as it allows for the timely identification of signs of burnout and the implementation of preventive measures.

Another important component should be considered the use of effective coping strategies aimed at regulating emotional state and increasing stress resistance [2]. The set of coping strategies is usually divided into two groups: 1) those related to a problem-oriented approach; 2) emotion-oriented coping strategies. Problem-oriented coping strategies include structuring the workflow, clear planning of workload, and defining professional boundaries. Emotion-oriented coping strategies include relaxation techniques, mindfulness practices, and body-oriented recovery techniques. All of the above is quite difficult for psychologists to implement under martial law conditions, as specialists work with limited time and resources, and an important condition for the effectiveness of these mechanisms is the systematic application and

individualization according to personal characteristics.

A significant role in ensuring professional self-preservation is played by maintaining psychological boundaries in interactions with clients. Working with traumatic experiences is often accompanied by the risk of excessive emotional strain, which can lead to a decrease in objectivity and exhaustion. Establishing clear professional boundaries, being aware of one's own responsibilities and limitations of competence, allows reducing the risk of emotional overload and maintaining the effectiveness of the therapeutic process.

Supervision deserves special attention as one of the forms of regular support for psychologists. Regular participation in supervision groups or individual supervision facilitates the processing of complex cases, reduces emotional stress levels, and prevents secondary traumatization [3]. Supervision is also intended to perform the function of professional reflection, which enables specialists to maintain a high level of professional competence and avoid distortions in professional activity.

We also consider social support to be an important resource for professional preservation, which includes both the professional environment and personal surroundings. The professional environment includes colleagues and interdisciplinary teams, while personal surroundings consist of family members and friends. The presence of supportive relationships helps reduce stress levels, increases the sense of safety and stability, and provides an opportunity for personal recovery outside of professional activities.

Equally important is the implementation of organizational strategies aimed at optimizing the working conditions of psychologists. This includes rational workload distribution, ensuring periods of rest, access to professional development resources, and creating a safe working environment. Institutional support is a necessary condition for the formation of an effective system of professional self-preservation, as even a high level of professional resilience cannot fully compensate for systemic overloads.

Thus, the strategies of professional self-preservation for psychologists working with war trauma are of a complex nature and include individual, interpersonal, and organizational components. Their implementation allows not only to reduce the risk of developing professional destructions but also to ensure the stability of the psychological assistance system under conditions of prolonged stress. In modern conditions, professional self-preservation gains the status of a strategic resource, influencing the quality of psychological support for military personnel and the effectiveness of their psychosocial rehabilitation processes.

#### **References:**

1. Sizer M. The Enduring Protective Role of Psychological Resilience Against Death Anxiety in Counseling Psychologists. *Omega (Westport)*. 2025
2. Coppens CM, de Boer SF, Koolhaas JM. Coping styles and behavioural flexibility: towards underlying mechanisms. *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci*. 2010.
3. Hall J, Kasujja R, Oakes P. Clinical supervision for clinical psychology students in Uganda: an initial qualitative exploration. *Int J Ment Health Syst*. 2015.