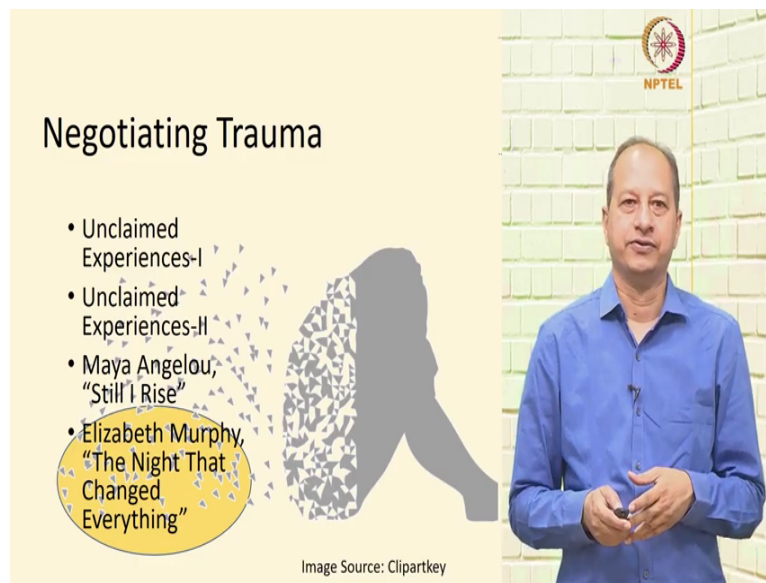


Literature and Coping Skills
Professor Ajit K Mishra
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Lecture 28

Elizabeth Murphy, “The Night That Changed Everything”

Hello everybody, I am Ajit K. Mishra, your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am here yet again with the last lecture of this module on negotiating trauma. In the last three lectures I walked you through the idea of trauma, its various aspects, its impacts and various coping strategies that we can employ in order to take care of our traumatic experiences or negotiate trauma in a manner so that we can return to normal life and we can ensure our well-being.


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So, today I am going to walk you through the idea of a very different kind of trauma with the help of a poetic composition by Elizabeth Murphy “The Night That Changed Everything”. As I walk you through the poetic composition I will also be taking about the various coping skills and strategies that the speaker in this particular poetic composition uses, but before I take you there, I will be walking you through the idea of this different kind of trauma that we call sexual violence, because this is a poetic composition which is based on the idea of sexual violence and its

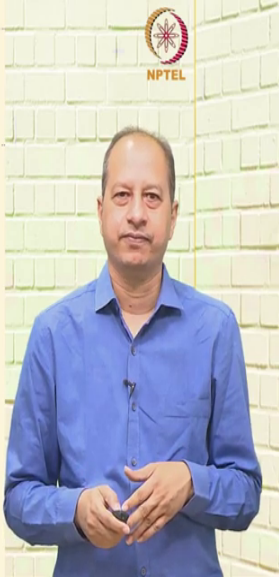
implications for the psychological well-being of a person or the victim. So, let us look at each of these things.

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Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

- According to the WHO, “Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner”
- According to the CDC “intimate partner violence” describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse”



This kind of sexual violence is called intimate partner violence or IPV. Intimate partner violence is one of the most raging issues associated with trauma or PTSD, so many surveys and researchers have established the fact that IPV is one of the major perpetrators of PTSD. It leads to sexual violence which in fact severely dense the psychological and to the physiological makeup of the trauma victim.

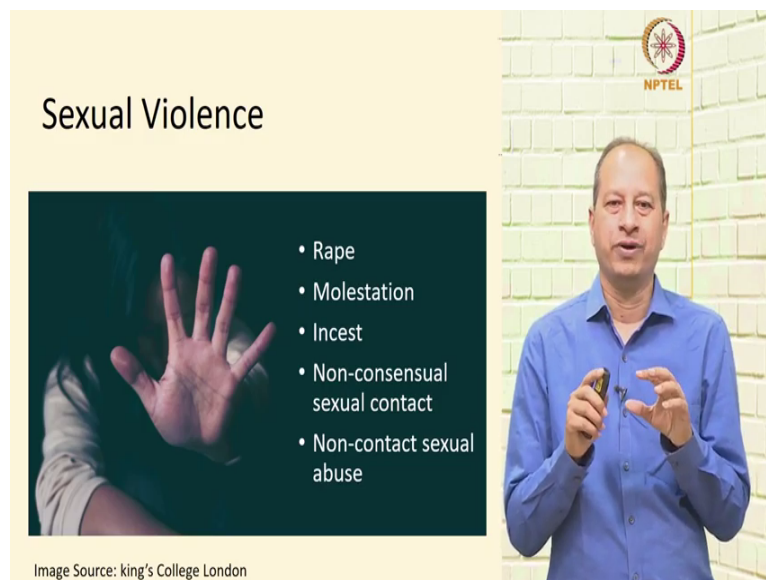
Therefore, it is very, very important for everyone to be aware of intimate partner violence and to know how to talk about intimate partner violence, so that the impact or the effect of this particular devastating experience can be minimized or can be rid off. So, therefore it is important that we also take look at intimate partner violence.

According to the World Health Organization intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women, so that is very, very important, because this is one type of violence which has a very specific victim category that is a woman. So, it is a very common form of violence against women and this type of violence includes both physical, sexual and emotional abuse and controlling behaviors by an intimate partner.

The intimate partner can be a husband, can be a friend, can be a live-in partner, it can be anybody, but it is the intimate partner, the male partner especially who is the perpetrator of this kind of violence, and as a result of this violence the psychological and the physiological set up or makeup of a female person gets severely dented. So, sometimes this kind of violence is also called battery. We will take another look at a definition given to us by CDC, The Center for Disease Control and prevention. Intimate partner violence describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking or psychological harm by a current or formal partner or spouse.

So, when we take a close look at these two definitions, we will understand that this type of violence is very closely associated with sexual violence as well. Apart from the physical violence which leads to physical injury and physical harm. There is this particular element which looms large over this particular type of experience which we call Intimate Partner Violence. So, for our purpose of understanding the sexual violence I will be focusing on the various aspects of sexual violence and its implications for the well-being or the altered well-being status of the victim. So, let us take a look at sexual violence.

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The slide is titled "Sexual Violence" and features a list of five types of sexual violence: Rape, Molestation, Incest, Non-consensual sexual contact, and Non-contact sexual abuse. To the left of the list is a photograph of a person's hand with fingers spread. To the right is a photograph of a man in a blue shirt speaking, with an NIPTEL logo in the top right corner. The background of the slide is a light yellow color.

Sexual Violence

- Rape
- Molestation
- Incest
- Non-consensual sexual contact
- Non-contact sexual abuse

Image Source: king's College London

Sexual violence also includes some kind of psychological violence as well because sexual violence which begins as a form of physical violence. In fact, results in psychological

devastations for the victim. Therefore, it is very complex kind of violence, sexual abuse, sexual assault or sexual violence. Sexual violence is shockingly common across societies.

That is something which requires our immediate attention towards it because we can, with the little contributions that we can make, we can actually bring about certain positive changes to this particular condition. So, sexual violence is a shockingly common phenomenon across all societies.

The disease control center that is CDC in the United States has also reported that 1 in 5 women in the United States are raped or sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. That is a huge figure and we also have similar data for our countries as well, so that is in fact a very, very disturbing data, disturbing piece of information and when we come to Asian, African or Middle Eastern countries that figure is even higher, that is even disturbing.

And all this happens because of an intimate partner, a person whom these victims trust or know closely, so that is the problem and that is one big reason why it is very difficult for us to contain this particular menace. So, it is important that we wake up to this particular challenge timely. Regardless of age or gender the impact of sexual violence goes far beyond any physical injuries, I told you that. The trauma of being raped or sexually assaulted can be shattering, leaving a person feeling scared, ashamed and alone or plagued by nightmares, flashbacks and other unpleasant memories.

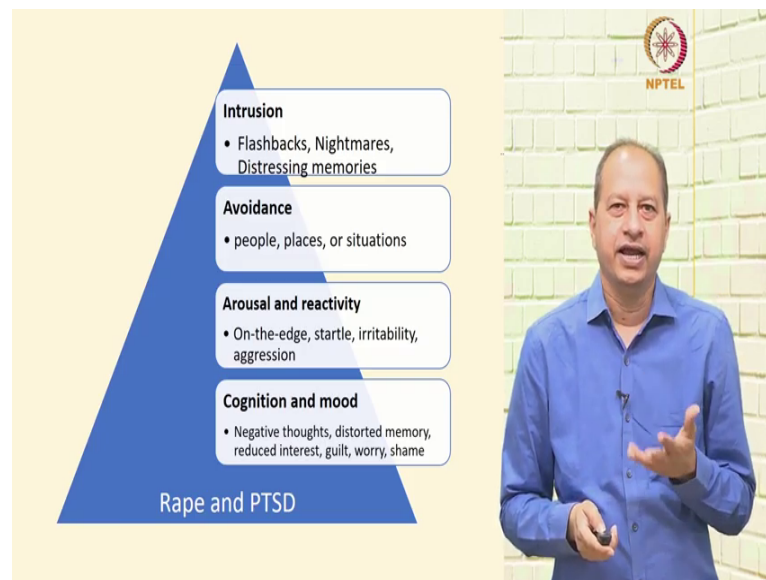
The world doesn't feel like a safe place anymore to the victim and the victim no longer trusts others because that element is lost and sometimes the victim does not even trust oneself. So, the victim may begin to question one's judgment, self worth and even sanity, the mental stability. And then the person may begin to blame oneself or what happened and the person may also begin to feel that one is dirty or damaged and this will affect relationships severely and intimacy will be dented and on top of that like many rape survivors' people may struggle with PTSD, anxiety and depression.

Now, these are some of those most disturbing issues associated with the idea of sexual violence. So, sexual violence if we have to understand the idea is related to rape, all kinds of rape,

including date rape, which is a very complex form of rape because of the excuses thrown by the perpetrators. And then molestation which is a very, very pervasive phenomenon in our societies. Incest, again is very pervasive. Non-consensual sexual contact that is without the consent or without the permission of the other partner. If advances are made so it can be instances of fondling, it can be instances of groping, touching, bad touch.

I mean it can be instances of coming closer, making advances and then non-contact sexual abuse can be examples of revenge on pornographic sites, it can be texting sexually, objectionably, objectionable content and a variety of other things. So, sexual violence is one of the major problems we all see around us. Therefore, we need to take care of, we need to grow our awareness of this particular menace.

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When it comes to rape and PTSD, rape survivors or rape victims in fact pass through all those stages of PTSD that the non-rape victims experience. So, it can be intrusion that means rape victims can relive the same disturbing events through flashbacks, nightmares even distressing memories.

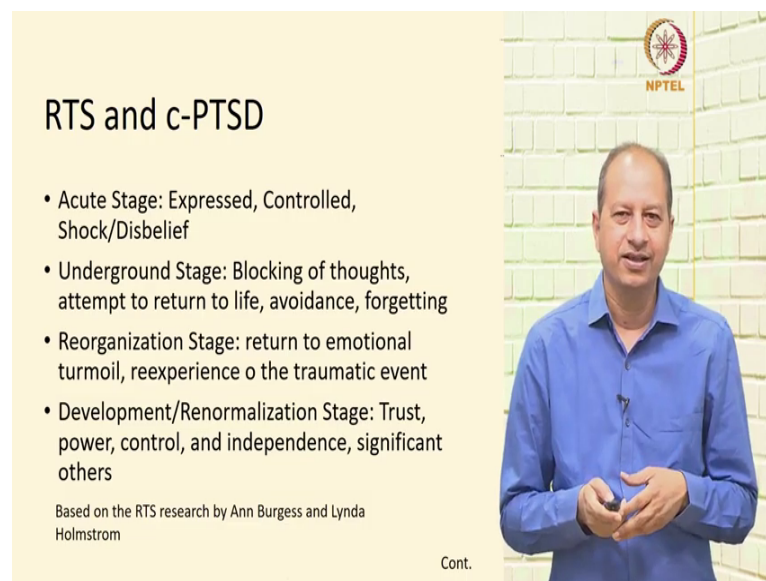
There may be objects; there may be ideas, there may be people, there may be things that will constantly remind these rape survivors of the distressing memories or the traumatic experience.

Then that will lead to avoidance, they will begin to withdraw from everyday life and this withdrawal might result in a withdrawal from oneself that will be a very, very serious challenge.

And then arousal and reactivity on-the-edge syndrome, you will always be in a state of fear because the cortisol level will always be very, very high, startle experience, irritation, anger, aggression and then finally cognition and mood will also be severely affected by this particular experience, so that will lead to negative thoughts, self blame, self hatred, guilt, shame and a variety of other things and problem in concentrating, problem in decision making or losing interest in all activities in life will be the symptoms.

So, when we look at the symptoms that are reported by rape survivors and those for the PTSD victims there is a whole lot of similarities between these two, but apart from these similarities there are other factors as well that are very, very specific to the rape survivors and that is called RTS or rape trauma syndrome.

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The slide features a yellow background with a white text box on the left and a video frame on the right. The video frame shows a man in a blue shirt speaking, with an NPTEL logo in the top right corner. The text on the slide is as follows:

RTS and c-PTSD

- Acute Stage: Expressed, Controlled, Shock/Disbelief
- Underground Stage: Blocking of thoughts, attempt to return to life, avoidance, forgetting
- Reorganization Stage: return to emotional turmoil, reexperience o the traumatic event
- Development/Renormalization Stage: Trust, power, control, and independence, significant others

Based on the RTS research by Ann Burgess and Lynda Holmstrom

Cont.

A very different kind of trauma syndrome, which is slightly different from the traditional or the regular PTSD syndromes. And then this particular kind of syndrome leads to c-PTSD that is Complex PTSD and even severe form of PTSD or extended form of PTSD. So, in the rape

trauma stage or syndrome the victims will pass through different stages. The first of which is Acute Stage.

The Acute Stage will show expressed, controlled and shock expressions, approaches for example, expressed approaches, the person will begin to cry so you know yell, scream that this has happened to me. Why me only, was I the chosen one and the variety of other things and this will be very, very expressive, extremely expressive.

Then the second stage may be a controlled one, the second type of expression in this Acute Stage may be a controlled one. One will begin to show as if nothing has happened, one will try to hide those emotional disturbances or distressing emotions from others owing to a variety of things, public shaming or losing one's integrity in the public and so on.

So, it will be controlled. One will show as if nothing has happened and one will show as if one is normal and everything is normal in his, I mean her life and then it can also be an expression of shock and disbelief. I cannot believe this, I can't believe my friend, my partner can do this to me. So, there is a sense of disbelief. And then we come to the Underground Stage in which thoughts are blocked, avoidance is a very, very important, negative coping strategy in this stage. Avoidance, forgetting all negative coping strategies are in fact used during this stage.


And then we come to the Reorganization Stage. This is a stage where the victim tries to return to life through re-experiencing all those traumatic experiences, re-experiencing the traumatic event, so that one is able to put aside the impact of the traumatic experiences forever or in a convincing manner.

Forgetting will help you escape the disturbing effects of the traumatic experience for a short period but reorganization will help you put aside and move on in life, so that is very, very important. And then finally, the Development and Re-normalization Stage in which the victim begins to build or rebuild trust and gains power and control over one's body, one's mind and feels independent.

And the victim also begins to discover the significant others. If you remember I told you that the victim will lose trust, so regaining that trust in significant others is this particular stage. If a

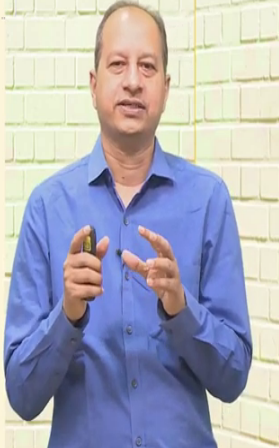
victim passes through all these stages the victim will be able to overcome RTS and one can always return to life and begin to re-experience those wide range of emotions again. So, this is based on the RTS research done by Ann Burgess and Lynda Holmstrom. So, it is a very popular research.

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c-PTSD

- Dysregulation in three psychobiological areas: (1) emotion processing, (2) self-organization (including bodily integrity), and (3) relational security
- Difficulty controlling emotions
- Negative self-view.
- Difficulty with relationships
- Feeling as if you are permanently damaged or worthless
- Feeling like nobody can understand what happened to you
- Loss of a system of meanings



So, c-PTSD has certain differences from PTSD, for example it is all about dysregulation in three psychobiological areas: emotion processing, self-organization and then relational security. All these things will be dis-regulated or severely affected. And that will lead to difficulty controlling emotions, negative self-view, you will begin to blame yourself and difficulty with relationships, because the person will not be able to trust anyone, anymore and then feeling as if you are permanently damaged or you have become worthless.

You will develop self-hatred, self-pity and then loss of a system of meanings. Your belief in your value system will go forever and then the person might also feel that nobody can understand what happened to you, because nobody will come to you with an open mindset and try to understand what happened to you and will reaffirm that it did not happen because of you. It happened because of somebody else; so that is the kind of feeling which will lead to this Complex PTSD.

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The slide is titled "The Night That Changed Everything" by Elizabeth Murphy. It features a poem on the left and a speaker on the right. The poem is:

Wrapped up warm
Safe and sound
Nothing to worry
But being dreamed bound

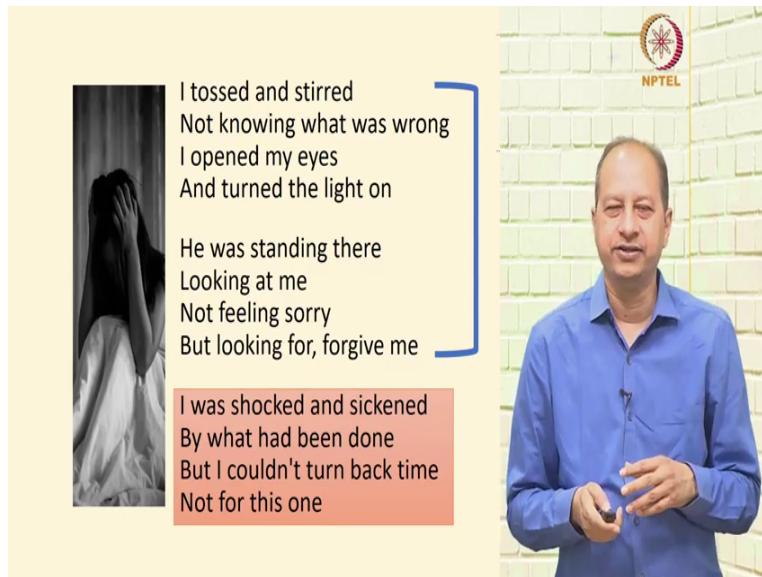
Sweet dreams came to me
In the peace of the night
But something would happen
That would change my life

The speaker is a man in a blue shirt, standing in front of a wall of yellow sticky notes. The NPTEL logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide. The text "Image Source: Conversation.com" is at the bottom left.

So, that way we come to “The Night That Changed Everything” by Elizabeth Murphy. So, you can see a few bright things in the beginning that is exactly what the victim was feeling like in the beginning just before that particular traumatic event or that disturbing event happened or that terrible event happened.

So, she was perfectly fine. She was feeling extremely elated in a good mood. She was at peace with herself and suddenly something happened and then that particular something changed her life forever. So, this is how we get introduced to the idea of this particular kind of partner rape or date rape in which the partner in fact ends up raping the female partner and thus severely denting the psychological setup.

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I tossed and stirred
Not knowing what was wrong
I opened my eyes
And turned the light on

He was standing there
Looking at me
Not feeling sorry
But looking for, forgive me

I was shocked and sickened
By what had been done
But I couldn't turn back time
Not for this one

And then the victim begins to vividly depict the events that led to that particular terrible event, in fact the experiences that led to that particular terrible experience or trauma. So, “He was standing there looking at me not feeling sorry but looking for, forgive me” something happened, that particular thing happened and as a result of which now this victim finds herself in a state of shock and sickening feeling so, but “What had been done but I could not turn back time not for this one”.

Now this is a very, very powerful statement. Now the realization is immediate, she realizes that what has been done cannot be undone, therefore she cannot change that particular time and therefore she has to do things that will help her move ahead or move on in life instead of getting stuck at this particular moment, so that is the kind of realization which in fact makes the victim here stronger although she is shocked and sickened in the beginning. And then the sudden realization, the acute stage is over and then she enters that particular realization stage and then we come to how she felt.

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A tear ran down
The side of my face
He took off
At a quick pace


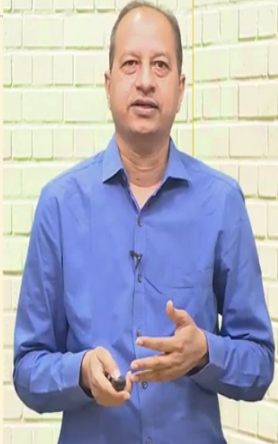

I was left there
Sobbing away
He was next door
And was there to stay

I felt like dirt
Like I wanted to die
I couldn't escape
From this evil guy

Now, what is interesting and important here is how vividly she has depicted each and every experience of hers. Most people say that trauma victims generally forget a large part of the trauma experience and when they begin to recall the trauma experiences or the trauma event, they tend to forget large part of it, but in this case the speaker remembers almost everything that happened and how she responded or reacted to that particular happening, that particular terrible event.

So, “A tear ran down” that is very normal, because you are in a state of shock, disbelief and then “I was left there sobbing away” you know these expressive stages in which a person sobs, cries, wails and then body shame, self-hatred, “I felt like dirt, like I wanted to die” so the suicidal thoughts also visit the victim’s mind. I could not escape from this evil guy.

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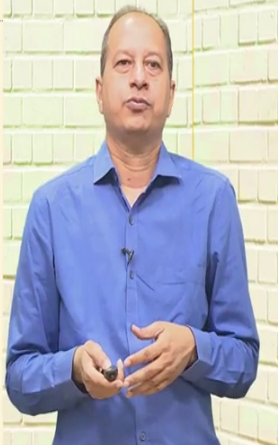



In the morning
I found a note
It said, "Sorry, but I love you"
It seemed like a sick joke

My mind started to spin
I felt sick
I put the note in the fire
And made sure I burnt it

And then we come to “In the morning I found a note, it said 'Sorry, but I love you' it seemed like a sick joke” and then the victim does something very, very important. “I put the note in the fire and made sure I burnt it.” So, this burning is, the burning of that letter, that note is in fact a very important coping strategy that the speaker adopts here. Burning means you are removing the trace of that particular thing forever, she does that.

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A few years have gone by
And here I am
That night is in my mind
But I still stand

I feel so much stronger
Than I have ever before
I'm putting the night behind me
So I can open a new door

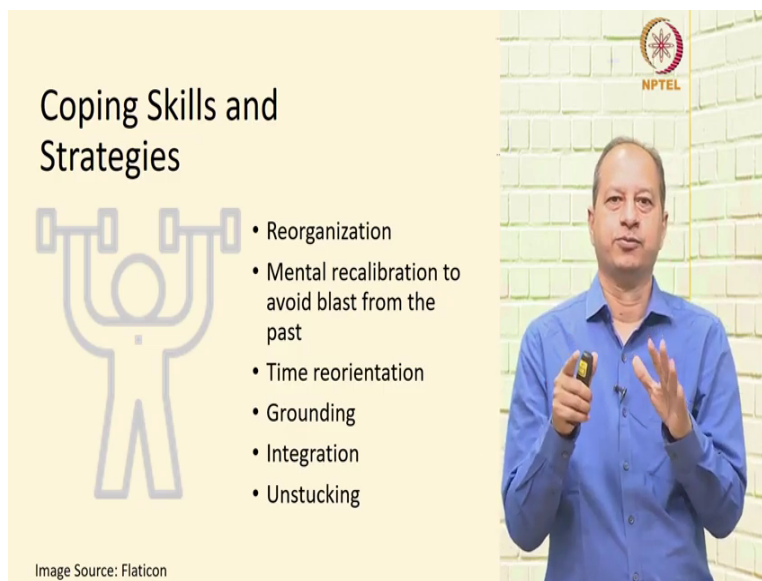
Source: <https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/the-night-that-changed-everything>

And then we come to the last segment of this poetic composition where she says that, A few years have gone by and here I a.m., that night is in my mind but I still stand. It clearly suggests that it is very, very difficult for a trauma victim or a rape survivor to forget the traumatic experiences completely.

It will continue to return to you but what is important is whether it returns to haunt you, disturb you or you are in a place, in a position to subside it is disturbing power. That is exactly what the speaker here does, but I still stand. I have not fallen, I still stand.

And then the final statements, statements of affirmation, I feel so much stronger than I have ever before, I am putting the night behind me, so I can open a new door. So, it is a future oriented depiction, affirmation in which the speaker in fact says that, yes, that had happened to me but I am in a position to overcome, I am in a position to put that behind and I can open the new door right in front of me and I can enter a new life. So, there is acceptance, there is a re-experiencing. Thus, the speaker, the rape survivor in this poetic composition tries to re-experience all those things. So, this re-experiencing helps her come to terms with that particular terrible event or traumatic experience.

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The slide features a yellow background. On the left, there is a faint icon of a person with arms raised. To the right of the icon is a bulleted list of coping strategies. On the far right, a man in a blue shirt is speaking, holding a small device. The NPTEL logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide area.

Coping Skills and Strategies

- Reorganization
- Mental recalibration to avoid blast from the past
- Time reorientation
- Grounding
- Integration
- Unsticking

Image Source: Flaticon

So, that takes us to the various coping strategies employed by or skills employed by the speaker in this poem. Reorganization is a very, very important coping skill that the speaker employs in this particular poetic composition, because in the reorganization stage you return, you allow yourself to re-experience all those distributing emotions.

She does that. She is recounting her traumatic story, traumatic experience and she does that successfully. And she doesn't leave out any of those experiences. How she felt what happened to her and then what the perpetrator of that violence did and then how she responded, every bit of it. So, the story is very, very complete. So, she is not afraid of re-experiencing all those disturbing emotions yet again, so that is the power of reorganization. And then she goes for mental re-calibration. You all know calibration is all about making little changes so that a device or system can work better. We do so with our smartphones periodically. We calibrate our smartphones or re-calibrate them so that we, they continue to work well or better for us.

So, that is exactly what we can also do to our mindsets. So, the speaker or the rape survivor here does that. She goes for some mental re-calibration. For example, I cannot change what has happened, the only thing I can change is I will stop that particular feeling or experience that continues to disturb me. I can do something about that. I cannot change what has happened; so that is a kind of recalibration and then towards the end. I have decided to open a new door. Therefore, I feel stronger, because my system is again working well because I have gone for mental re-calibration. So, periodically we can also go for mental re-calibration. So, we make this mental system work better. And then time reorientation is a wonderful coping skill that the speaker employs here. That means instead of returning to the past time and again. She is a forward-looking person.

She prefers to look at the future. So, she is future oriented rather than past oriented. So, she lives in the present, I stand here and then she focuses on the future, a new door will be opened. So, time orientation skill is a very, very important skill. That will promptly help you focus on the future and this is a skill that most athletes and surgeons, even space scientists' practice because they have to focus a lot on the future. They can visualize the future, so that they are not haunted by the past anymore.

So, grounding is again a very important coping skill that the speaker uses here. She keeps herself grounded. Therefore, she is not dissociated from herself. She does not experience depersonalization or derealization. So, she keeps herself grounded, that means she knows her present. She is not lost in the past. She knows the present very, very well and on the basis of her present conditions she knows what to do in the future. So, she is thoroughly grounded. Once a person is not grounded, well one will be lost in the past and then integration is a very important skill that she uses here.

She tries to integrate several things. She tries to integrate her thoughts, positive thoughts, positive visualizations, positive actions, because she acts well and that is how she achieves integration in this. And then finally she has been able to do all these things because she practices a very important coping skill that is un-stucking. She does not allow her to be stuck in one particular point in time that means she does not allow her to be stuck in that particular moment. That is the terrible event, the rape, she does not allow her to be stuck there all the while.

She returns to that particular point just to relieve herself to re-experience and then re-normalize to relieve herself of that particular burden. Now, she is back. So, she is not stuck. So, unstucking is a very, very important skill that we all can use. Just imagine if you allow your mind to be stuck at one particular point, especially a negative one. Now, how adversely that is going to affect you. All we have to do is to release it. It is almost like you know freezing and releasing. So, we will have to release so that we can take ourselves away from that particular point.

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So, that is how we come to the end of this lecture. I hope this has helped you understand a set of new coping skills which we discovered with the help of “The Night That Changed Everything”. So, when we meet next I will be talking about a new module. So, thank you for joining me.