

Empirical Study of Family Conflicts as a Factor of Emotional Burnout of a Woman

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Abstract: *Objective:* Conflict issues have always been relevant to any society, but in Ukraine, at all stages of its development, conflicts had not just a noticeable place, but also influenced its history.

Background: Conflicts, of course, adversely affect these processes, because a woman spends most of her life in the family and, of course, the climate inside the family affects the emotional state of all its members.

Method: To study the relationship between the level of conflict in the family and the emotional burnout of a woman, we used the following research methods: empirical – methodologies of Y. Aleshina, L. Hoffmann, E. Dubovskaya "The nature of the interaction of the matrimony in conflict situations" and V. Boiko "Diagnostics of emotional burnout", statistical – Pearson's linear correlation coefficient.

Results: The study involved 80 participants. The study also determined the relationship between the evaluation of the work-life balance and organizational parameters. As a result of the study, we determined that the syndrome most characteristic of women is exhaustion, at the average level – stress, at a low level, is a resistance.

Conclusion: The study suggests that in families with a high level of conflict, there is emotional exhaustion in women.

Keywords: Family life cycle, marital relationship, stage of resistance, social role.

INTRODUCTION

According to L. Polivalina [1], a family is an association of people based on marriage or consanguinity, connecting them with shared household, mutual moral responsibility and mutual assistance. Not a single sphere of human life is free from conflict. Families are no exception. Conflict is a clash, serious disagreement, in which a person is embraced by unpleasant feelings or experiences. Conflicts are inevitable; they appear under any life circumstances and accompany us from birth to death.

Throughout life, the family goes through several qualitatively different stages, the sequence of which turns into a family life cycle. Under the cycle, one needs to understand the period from family creation to its breakup. When they are singled out by sociologists, as a rule, they use the criteria of marriage duration and the separation of family functioning. In this regard, sociologists propose various classifications of the life cycle of the family according to criteria on which such classifications are based on. For example, some

scholars suggest the following stages of the family life cycle: from the birth of the family to the birth of their first child; reproductive phase: birth of children; "empty nest" – marriage and separation of the last child from the family; incomplete family: starts with the death of one of the members of the marriage.

On average, all marriages break up before the age of 75. Of which, 23% – as a result of the death of a wife, 53% – the death of a husband, 24% – a divorce [2]. Throughout the life cycle, family roles change: their distribution changes, some roles disappear, while others appear, transfer from one family member to another. Many social roles persist throughout the entire cycle, but the content and external manifestations change. For example, at first, the role of the mother is to control and provide guardianship of the children, which is later replaced by the role of the adviser and partner. When children have their own personal lives, and they turn for less advice to fathers, the latter perceive a change in their behaviour as a sign of alienation, although in reality, this is not so: the roles and patterns of behaviour simply change.

In recent years, in families, the number of conflict situations causing family issues has been growing, thereby contributing to the divorce of families. Thus,

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conflict is a signal that there may be a contradiction in views, interests, needs. Dysfunctional families are characterized by the fact that between partners, there are constant areas where their needs and interests, intentions clash, giving rise to long-lasting and strong negative emotional experiences. In studying the problems of family conflict, one cannot but pay attention to the approach of V.K. Myager, T.M. Mishina and V.P. Kozlov [3], who believe that a conflict in the family occurs when both participants strive to take possession of the same object, occupy the same place or exclusive position, play incompatible roles, achieve differently directed goals. Family dysfunction is always based on both visible and external inconspicuous conflicts of interpersonal, social, and psychophysical and physiological nature [4]. Consequently, conflict is the most acute way to eliminate contradictions that arise in the process of interaction, which consists in counteracting the subjects of conflict and is usually accompanied by negative emotions.

Emotional burnout is one of the new mechanisms of protection addressed in the psychological literature, so its definition is somewhat blurred. It should be noted that emotional burnout is always considered and treated only on the negative side. And, of course, for this there are specific reasons because when a person is in such a state, it affects the performance of their activities, relationships with partners, clients and loved ones, as it leads to emotional and personal detachment, dissatisfaction with oneself, after what anxiety, depression, and inadequate emotional response to normal life situations follow [2]. According to V. Boiko's [5] definition, emotional burnout is a mechanism of psychological protection produced by the individual in the form of complete or partial exclusion of emotions in response to selected psycho-traumatic influences. Emotional burnout is an acquired stereotype of emotional, often professional, behaviour. The term "burnout" is commonly used to refer to a person's state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged involvement in situations with high emotional demands, which in turn are most often the result of a combination of excessively high emotional costs and chronic situational stress [3].

To cope with emotional burnout, one needs a rest. Psychologists are convinced that coping with "emotional burnout" is a change of activity for a certain time period. Emotional burnout does not occur suddenly, this problem accumulates over time, and only sometimes manifests itself in the form of

symptoms. K. Maslach [6] views emotional burnout as a process. It identifies four stages in which successively prevail: idealism and excessive demands on oneself; emotional and mental exhaustion; dehumanization as a way of protection; disgust syndrome (towards oneself – towards others – towards everything). All this finally leads to collapse (resignation, illness). Most foreign authors, considering the process of burnout, note that it begins with the tension, which is the result of a contradiction between the expectations, intentions, desires and ideals of the individual and the demands of harsh everyday reality. The result of this imbalance is stressed that can be realized by the individual or remain unconscious for a long time. The way an individual copes with these stresses is critical to the development of burnout. The approach of a one-factor model of emotional burnout of A. Pines and E. Aronson [7], who consider it as a state of physical, emotional and cognitive exhaustion occurring due to prolonged stay in emotionally stressful situations, appears to be somewhat reasonable.

Russian scientist V.V. Boiko [5: 84] characterizes the syndrome of emotional burnout as follows: "it is a personality-produced mechanism of psychological protection in the form of exclusion of emotions (reduction of energy) in response to selected psycho-traumatic effects; also the expansion of the scope of negative emotions and reducing positive nine emotions". Japanese researchers believe that to determine the emotional burnout, the three-factor model of K. Maslach [6] should be complemented by a fourth factor – "Involvement", which is characterized by headaches, sleep disorders, irritability, including the presence of chemical dependence (alcoholism, smoking).

There is a relationship between conflict and conflicting personalities. Of course, some people experience positive emotions during a conflict. Some, however, experience them extremely painfully, because of intolerance of any mental stress. Some traits of a person's character (anger, temper, capriciousness) can exacerbate differences that arise, increase hostility in relationships. That's why it is important to cultivate qualities that can contribute to the ability to build relationships with people. It is a fair assumption to say that if, for some reason, a married couple failed to find the proper, adequate way to solve their problems, the conflict, even natural and expected for this stage of the family's life cycle, is considered insurmountable. Research of T.V. Andreeva [4] cite curious factors of modelling the male self-image mainly

in the areas of “work”, “love”, “cognition”, while at the same time ignoring the sphere associated with family roles. At the same time, the female self-image is mainly formed around the areas of “love”, “family”, “children”, “financially established life”.

Quite often, conflicts arise in families due to insignificant situations. To quarrel, anything goes mutual misunderstanding, differing opinions on how to properly hold a spoon, brush teeth, hobbies, etc. For this, just some kind of mind-set is needed, making a quarrel inevitable. There is no greater resentment than that caused by a significant other. After this, resentment arises, which can cause aggression. According to V.P. Ratnikov [8], during spouses' adaptation to each other, the most typical causes of conflict can be the following: interpersonal incompatibility; leadership claims; claims of superiority; distribution of household chores; claims for budget management; using the advice of family members or friends; intimate personality adaptation.

Therefore, family relationships are based on obligations to one another, to themselves and society. Each spouse can understand their or their partner's obligations differently, ignore them, force the other partner to perform, and so on. Often, marriage becomes a platform for manipulating each other and substituting common goals for personal ones. Family relationships are formed in most cases based on the experience of the parental family of each spouse (which is sometimes very difficult to unite in a uniform understanding), and extremely rare based on the mature ideas and realistic wishes of each partner. This is the cause of family conflict. The couple should address the issue, which will help rethink the motives of the conflict.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In studying the problem, emotional burnout is distinguished as a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion caused by a prolonged stay in emotionally overloaded communication situations, i.e. “burnout” as a syndrome of “chronic fatigue” [6, 9, 10]. K. Maslach [6] identifies three groups of emotional burnout: physical; behavioural; psychological. Physical include fatigue, a feeling of exhaustion; shortness of breath; insomnia. Behavioural and psychological: resentment; feeling of frustration; uncertainty; guilt; irritability; paying attention to details; general negative attitude towards life prospects. A complete classification of burnout symptoms is presented by

W. Schaufeli and Van Dierendonck [11], D. Enzmann and D. Kleiber [12]. The classification is built on two grounds. The fundamental basis for identifying symptoms is the nature of the sphere of the individual that they represent. Following them, 132 signs of burnout are distinguished, combined in 5 main groups: affective; cognitive; physical; behavioural; motivational [2].

To study the relationship between the level of conflict in the family and the emotional burnout of a woman, we used the following research methods: empirical – methodologies of Y. Aleshina, L. Hoffmann and E. Dubovskaya [13] “The nature of interaction of the matrimony in conflict situations”; and V.V. Boiko [14] “Diagnostics of emotional burnout”, statistical – Pearson's linear correlation coefficient. To study family conflicts, we chose the methodology of Y. Aleshina, L. Hoffmann and E. Dubovskaya [13: 49] “The nature of interaction of the matrimony in conflict situations”, which diagnoses a couple according to the following parameters: the most conflictogenic spheres of marital relations, degree of agreement (or disagreement) in situations of conflict, the level of conflict in the couple. The study of conflicts in married couples allowed the authors of the methodology to identify 8 areas in which clashes most often occur: problems of relations with relatives and friends; problems related to parenting; manifestation of aspirations for autonomy; violation of role expectations; inconsistency of norms of behaviour; manifestation of dominance by one of the matrimony; manifestation of jealousy; differences in attitude towards money.

The “Diagnostics of emotional burnout” methodology [14: 107] diagnoses the leading symptoms of “emotional burnout” and determines which phase of stress development they relate to: “stress”, “resistance”, “exhaustion”. Using the semantic content and quantitative indicators calculated for different phases of the formation of the “burnout” syndrome, one can give a sufficiently capacious description of the personality, evaluate the adequacy of the emotional response in a conflict situation, and outline individual activities. The presented methodology has been implemented in the course of the procedure of group and individual survey. The statistical processing of the data acquired was conducted with the use of software SPSS v 10.0 and Microsoft Excel, including the variable factors of statistics, the criteria in terms of difference and the correlational analyses.

The study involved participants (N = 80). The study also determined the relationship between the

Table 1: Characteristics of Professional Groups

Professional group	Total number of persons	Number of women	Age
Executives and business owners	16	16	35-56
Middle managers	23	23	28-53
Small entrepreneurs	7	7	26-38
Production workers	12	12	24-45
Practical psychologists	8	8	26-43
Social workers	3	3	33-55
University teachers	11	11	25-50

evaluation of the work-life balance and organizational parameters (form of ownership, sphere of activity, gender type of organization) (Table 1).

According to an experienced psychotherapist, maternal burnout occurs in those families where a woman feels prolonged and intense stress when communicating not only with strangers but also with her husband and her own child. Burnout usually occurs as a result of a significant burden of responsibility, the need to continually empathize with relatives, help them and find a common language with numerous relatives, but receiving nothing in return. It is the conflict that turns out to be a severe problem for the couple. Conflicts vary at different stages of family development. The most global role of the conflict during the formation of the family, when the married couple starts adapting to each other. It is at this stage that it is important to identify ways and means of resolving conflict situations. When a child is born, new problems arise in the family that requires consensus, and the household and educational function also acquires particular importance. At the stage when the child is growing up, the marriage is retired, family relations are changing, and the conflict has a different basis.

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. A study was approved by the Central Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, November 18, 2019, No 1584-I. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

RESULTS

As a result of the study, we determined that the syndrome most characteristic of women is exhaustion

(53%), signs and symptoms of this syndrome: physical and psychological problems such as depression can develop. A person may begin to doubt the value of their family, work, profession and, most importantly, life. Described by a complete loss of interest in the family and life in general, emotional indifference, torpor, a feeling of constant lack of strength. There is a violation of memory and attention, sleep disturbance. A person seeks solitude. Also, it speaks of psychological and physical stress, exhausting the body, accompanied by a feeling of fatigue, which appears at the stage of exhaustion. This is due to the consumption of more energy than during the period of emotional balance.

At the average level – stress (28%). All signs and symptoms manifest themselves in a mild form of self-care, for example, by organizing frequent interruptions in household chores, work. Forgetting some household activities starts to occur (for example, forgetting to iron husband's shirt). Typically, few people pay attention to these primary symptoms. This stage can form within three to five years. The tension is dynamic in nature, which is conditioned upon the constancy, which exhausts, or the amplification of factors. During this period, the human body undergoes increased activity. The prolonged stage of tension directly depends on strength and duration of stress, including on the state of the body. With prolonged stressful situations that last for a month or even a year, the human body is subjected to constant stress, which leads to various diseases.

At a low level is a symptom inherent in 20% of women – resistance, characterized by excessive emotional exhaustion. There is a lack of interest in work, in need for communication: no desire to see those with whom the specialist works, persistent somatic symptoms appear, i.e., lack of life force, energy, especially at the end of the week, headaches in the evenings, irritability, increased number of colds.

A person may feel exhausted after sleeping and even after the weekend. People with whom you work, live, communicate, start irritating you. A person begins to mistreat them, and then almost hate them. At the same time, a "burn-out" person themselves cannot understand the cause of the wave of irritation growing in them.

Also, each phase includes four symptoms. The following symptoms related to the phase of "exhaustion" are most specific among the subjects:

1. The symptom of "emotional deficiency" – the test subjects experience that emotionally they are no longer able to help the subjects of their activity. Being unable to show understanding, take part in joint activities and empathize, respond to household situations that should hurt, induce, strengthen intellectual, volitional and moral feedback.
2. The symptom of "emotional estrangement" – a person almost completely excludes emotions from the field of professional activity. It cares about almost nothing; almost nothing causes an emotional response – neither positive nor negative circumstances. Response without feelings and emotions is a vivid symptom of "burnout". It indicates a professional deformation of the personality and causes damage to the subject of communication.
3. The symptom of "personal alienation or depersonalization" – manifests itself in a complete or partial loss of interest in a person, husband, subject of professional activity. The object burdens professional with its problems, needs, and neither the presence nor the fact of its existence is pleasant.
4. The symptom of "psychosomatic and psycho-vegetative disorders" – manifests itself at the level of physical and mental wellness. The transition of reactions from the level of emotions to the level of psychosomatics indicates that emotional protection (from burnout) alone can no longer cope with the loads and the energy of emotions is redistributed between other subsystems of the personality. Thus, the body saves itself from the destructive power of emotional burnout.

At the middle level are the symptoms of the phase "stress":

- the symptom of "experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances" – manifests itself in test subjects in the increased awareness of psycho-traumatic factors of professional activity, which are difficult or impossible to remove;
- the symptom of "dissatisfaction with oneself" – as a result of setbacks or inability to influence traumatic circumstances, a person usually feels dissatisfaction with themselves, their chosen profession, position. There is a mechanism of "emotional transfer" – energy is directed not only and not so much outward, but on oneself;
- the symptom of "being boxed into a corner". When psycho-traumatic circumstances are very pressing and impossible to eliminate, a feeling of hopelessness often comes to us. We are trying to change something, thinking over and over again about the dissatisfying aspects of our work. This leads to an increase in mental energy due to the induction of the ideal: thinking works; plans, goals, and meanings work;
- the symptom of "anxiety and depression" – manifests itself in connection with professional activities in particularly difficult circumstances, prompting emotional burnout as a means of psychological protection. The feeling of dissatisfaction with work and oneself gives rise to a powerful energy tension in the form of experiencing situational or personal anxiety, disappointment in oneself, in the chosen profession.

At the last stage are the symptoms of the "resistance" phase:

- the symptom of "inadequate selective emotional response" is a sign of burnout when women stop catching the difference between an economic manifestation of emotions and an inadequate selective emotional response;
- the symptom of "emotional and moral disorientation" – often women have a need for self-justification, without showing the proper emotional attitude towards the subject, they defend their strategy. Such thoughts indicate that emotions do not sufficiently stimulate moral feelings;
- the symptom of "expanding the scope of saving emotions" – when this form of protection is

performed outside of professional activities (in communication with relatives, acquaintances and friends). At work, the researchers are so tired of contacts, conversations, answers to questions that they do not want to communicate even with loved ones;

- the symptom of "reduction of professional duties" – in a family, a reduction is manifested in attempts to alleviate duties that require an emotional cost.

According to the quantitative indicators obtained, it is fair to judge only the maturity of each phase (Figure 1).

As is evident, the most developed phase in women is the exhaustion phase (68%), the stress phase is the stage of formation (46%), and the least formed phase is the resistance phase (9%). Emotional protection in the form of "burnout" becomes an integral attribute of the individual. Thus, the results of the study suggest that the diagnosis of the level of emotional exhaustion of a woman is 53%, which indicates that such women are described by a complete loss of interest in the family and life in general, emotional indifference, lack of strength, exhaustion, memory impairment, attention disorder, and sleep disturbance are observed.

The study established that 68% of women who have been married for about five years, experience emotional burnout due to the high level of conflict in the family, which suggests that at the first stages of family life there are disputes: they cannot share family duties, do not compromise, experience jealousy. 32% of women living more than five years in marriage have

fewer conflict situations because they live together for many years, make concessions to each other, become wiser, family-oriented, have equal rights, experience joy and grief together, have each other's support. To establish whether there is a relationship between family conflicts and the emotional burnout of a woman, we have created a synthesis table that presents the prevailing areas of family conflict and the stages of emotional burnout of a woman (Table 2).

In general, the study suggests that in families with a high level of conflict there is emotional exhaustion in women, namely because of problems in relations with relatives and friends, issues related to raising children, the inconsistency of behavioural norms, and manifestations of jealousy. At the lowest level of conflict in women, a stage of resistance arises, in such areas as differences in attitude towards money, and inconsistency with role expectations. These results are confirmed by the Pearson linear correlation coefficient $r_{xy} = -0.60 < 0.05$, that is, the results between the level of conflict in the family and the emotional burnout of a woman are 99% statistically reliable, that is, the correlation exists, and it is significant. This suggests that there is a correlation between the level of conflict of the family and the emotional burnout of a woman.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the reasons for the greatest conflicts in the family are "relationship problems with relatives and friends", "issues related to parenting" – these are the most important areas because, at the initial stage of married life, there are problems with relations with relatives. Concerning parenting issues, most men believe that a wife should

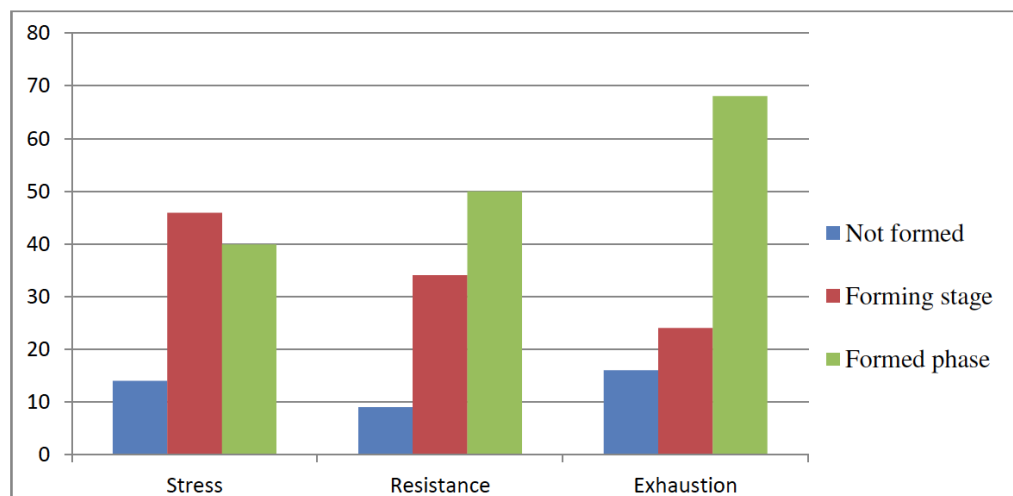


Figure 1: Indicators of Formation of Emotional Burnout Phases of Woman.

Table 2: Comparison of the Sphere of Family Conflicts and the Stages of Emotional Burnout of a Woman (According to the Results of the Study)

The sphere of family conflict	Stages of emotional burnout of a woman	The statistic used (r)
Relationship problems with relatives and friends (-0.48)	Exhaustion	19%
Issues related to parenting (-0.47)	Exhaustion	18%
A manifestation of the desire for autonomy (0.2)	Stress	8%
Inconsistency with role expectations (0.39)	Resistance	11%
Inconsistency of norms of behaviour (-0.31)	Exhaustion	6%
Manifestation of dominance by one spouse (-0.38)	Exhaustion	10%
Manifestation of jealousy (-0.21)	Stress 20	20%
Differences in attitude towards money (0.14)	Resistance	9%

be responsible for the upbringing of children, failing to understand that parenting should be on an equal footing.

The scale of "inconsistency of norms of behaviour" of partners is one of the causes of conflicts in a young family. In particular, inconsistency may arise due to a significant difference in the degree of manifestation of the following behavioural norms and rules among partners: carefulness, neatness, punctuality, courtesy, honesty, hard work, reliability, fairness, faithfulness, patience, time management, frequency of contacts, trust, hope, tenderness, sexuality, love, faith, imagination, attitude towards one's own body, to parents as an example, a role model.

In our case, the scale of "manifestations of dominance by one of the spouses" suggests that women want to be more dominant in family relationships, but do not understand the responsibility. However, this is the destiny of the male gender, while the nature of women is submission and service to their chosen one. Due to the impossibility of determining the dominant in a relationship, a conflict arises. "Manifestation of jealousy" is one of the most powerful, destructive and painful emotions in the family life of our women. There is an opinion that "if he is jealous, then he loves you". Unfortunately, this is one of the most common misconceptions existing in a relationship between a man and a woman. Jealousy is a destructive feeling that harms not only to the object of jealousy but also to the one being jealous. It is worth noting that 63% of women believe that the husband is the reason for a quarrel in the family because such situation happens in families quite often: the husband is guilty but does not want to admit he's wrong. The conflict is dragging on; tension between spouses is growing every day.

On the contrary, 37% believe that it is women who are to blame because it is known that women are more emotional. It is the woman who creates the general emotional mood in the family. As a rule, wives initiate various changes, such as new purchases, vacation trips, or the purchase of new furniture.

The most common cause of family conflict is the struggle for leadership. This is the first level of the issue. It should be emphasized that the function of domination and actualization are two different things. Being a commander and commanding is not the same thing. The husband can dominate in the family, and at the same time, the wife practically controls everything, but everyone understands that the wife controls everything solely because the husband trusts her with these functions. Leadership in the family is not a distribution of certain functions. This is an exclusive emotional relationship between spouses, and it is impossible to fight for such domination. The second level of the problem is the distribution of responsibilities. It should in no way be confused with the first one. Sometimes it is stated that the functions of leadership in the family are distributed. For example, the husband determines the cultural program, and the wife determines the family economy strategy. But this is not a division of domination, but a distribution of responsibilities, a reasonable distribution of labour. Domination, as we said above, cannot be distributed.

Emotional burnout is an acquired stereotype of emotional, most often professional, behaviour. "Burnout" is partly a functional stereotype, because it allows a person to dose and economically spends energy resources. At the same time, its dysfunctional consequences may occur when "burnout" adversely affects the performance of professional activities and relations with partners.

CONCLUSIONS

Emotional exhaustion is manifested in feelings of emotional overstrain and in the sense of emptiness, exhaustion of one's emotional resources, this symptom is inherent in most of our studies, exhaustion does not appear in women immediately, but because of family conflicts, namely in the manifestation of relationships with parents, raising children, jealousy. Quarrels of spouses most often arise because they do not know each other well. Furthermore, mutual understanding in the family depends on the ideas of both spouses about each other's responsibilities. If these ideas of the spouses converge, the quarrels in the family happen much less. Thus, for young spouses to build strong relationships, one needs to ensure that they have the right ideas on the social roles of men and women, including the psychological differences between people of opposite genders.

Due to conflict in the family, women gradually display emotional exhaustion – in the experience of emotional overstrain and in a sensation of emptiness, exhaustion of their emotional resources. A person feels that they cannot devote themselves to their family, parenting, become more active in work, as before.

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