

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW EXTRACT

[The in-depth oral history interview with the narrator was conducted on May 16, 2021 in Pristina. Due to the narrator's request for anonymity, we have concealed the identity.]

Narrator: I was depressed right after giving birth to my son, so, when my son turned six months old, after he turned six months old, there were two deaths in my husband's family. His grandmother, who lived with us, and his uncle. So, they died within two weeks and my son was little, so one death after another, and as a bride, I don't know, I was horrified as I had never seen, you know, there had never been any deaths in my [close] family.

And I was scared in a way and, when the second death happened, the people there would talk about horrifying stuff, events, and so I got depressed. I was very depressed, I went to every doctor, to psychologists, everywhere. I was breastfeeding my son, they'd say, "Stop breastfeeding him." But I never accepted getting therapy. Once, they gave me therapy, so I tried to take it. But upon taking the first pill, I had a headache for three days, I couldn't get up from my bed. I said I will not take it again.

I had that headache after only taking one pill. And I said, "No, I will try my hardest to get through this." The only thing that gave me strength was my son. So, it was, when I was at my lowest, every time I remember this I get emotional, when I was at my lowest the moment I held him close, he gave me strength in a way (voice trembling). So much strength that, I don't know, I'd say that I would only live for him. I was always scared that I would die the next day (cries), that I wouldn't be alive. And I'd feel uneasy, anxious, I can't explain in words how I felt.

So, I felt like that for around six months. For a month, I only stayed at my mother's house. I couldn't go to my husband's, because the moment I went inside that house I thought I was going to go crazy. I stayed with my son for a month at my mother's, that's why I'm so attached to him, and I sympathize

with him about everything, because in moments when I needed it the most, he was the one who gave me strength.

I'm always taking care of him even today, and sometimes I think maybe he also, I thought that I fed him with milk when I was depressed and my son is... I mean I breastfed him, and my son is always anxious like... he still has that feeling, he isn't a child that... he is very quiet, too [quiet], but he is scared of everything. So, when my grandfather died two years ago, my son was also something like that but he was a child, maybe he couldn't explain what he exactly felt. Maybe he was scared because he didn't see him [the grandfather] or anything. I came back after three days, he was asking for my grandfather because he loved him a lot.

And back then he was at the age of... he was in the first grade but he understood some things more or less, and he would wake up at night and ask me, "Mother, will you die like grandad?" That's what he called my grandfather. I'd tell him, "No, Honey, no, people die when they get old." My husband was working, he traveled to Germany for work to attend a training on blueberry cultivation, and, at that time, I stayed at my mother's house for a week. When he came back from school, he'd say, "Mom, I want to go buy a toy, I want to go buy a toy." You know, he cried. I'd tell him, "Let's go out and buy it." The moment we left the door, it was just the two of us.

I'd tell him, "Lon, did you really want to buy a toy, or did you want to go out?" "Mom, I just wanted to get out of the house because I feel like crying, will you die?" So, he had it in his head all the time. We both went crying, when we came back, he would get distracted by the toy, I would still come back crying. It hurt here, some kind of pain, and I thought to myself, "If I were to die, what would he do?" You know, I was so scared that, so much that, every morning when I would wake up, I would touch myself, am I alive, or am I dead?

Until I had a dream that maybe was a sign from God (laughs), I had a dream one night that I flew, I flew and fell into a hole, and I was holding my son and the angels were telling me, "We have to take you with us." I'd tell them, "Don't because my son will go crazy, he can't live, he will go crazy without me." Then the other angel said, "Leave her because her child can't handle it." And they went away and I woke up then, from that moment on all that fear went away. Maybe God sent me a sign to stray me from that kind of bad habit. But these were two of the hardest periods, because humans can handle anything, but depression is very bad.