

# Victim of domestic violence turns psychologist to help scarred women

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By YASUO OTA/ Staff Writer

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OSAKA--A woman who suffered repeated domestic violence while growing up and again in married life is now a psychologist reaching out to others through lectures and seminars.

Minako Fujiki, who is 55 and a part-time lecturer at Kansai University in Osaka and Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, has organized about 20 lectures at three women's shelters in Osaka since 2008 to help them cope with traumatic memories.

About 100 victims have attended her seminars, which aim at sharing memories of appalling times in order to deal with internal issues and correct persisting paranoia and other negative thoughts.

"I hope to discover methods to help victims recover from their experience of domestic violence by providing them with perspectives based on my own experience," Fujiki explained.

The native of Osaka's Nishinari Ward grew up in a poverty-stricken, single-mother family. When she was an elementary student, her mother attempted to kill herself, and Fujiki also suffered constant sexual abuse from her father-in-law.

When she got married, her husband attacked her physically and when she finally secured a divorce she was incapable of trusting people.

It put her in precarious positions at workplaces because she had communication problems that made her take colleagues' guileless words as criticism directed personally against her. It caused her to change her jobs frequently.

Fujiki eventually managed her communication and adjustment problems by delving into books on psychology. While doing so she made notes about social skills and behaviors that she thought would help her deal with her problems.

With her pile of memos about social skills numbering several hundred, she found herself at last able to control her emotions in order to more fully communicate with others.

Since publishing a memoir of her experiences of domestic violence and sexual abuse in 1995, she has received more than 100 offers for lecturers annually.

To develop her own methods to help people with communication problems improve on a social level, Fujiki enrolled at Osaka City University's graduate school in 2003 and started sharing her ideas at women's shelters five years later.

At her seminars, participants form small groups to discuss their issues, which helps them by sharing their painful experiences.

For those who are still plagued by feelings of guilt, paranoia and other negative attitudes, Fujiki listens carefully to what they have to say to correct "distortions" of their self-perceptions.

A participant in one of Fujiki's recent seminars--a nurse in her 30s from Osaka--said it helped her "cut a chain of violence," which had plagued her since she was a child.

As she grew up witnessing her mother sustaining constant physical abuse from her father, she started thinking that it was natural for a woman to endure such horrors inflicted by a partner.

Her ex-husband also abused her even after the divorce. She had no means of stopping him from forcing his way into her residence. Their daughter was also subjected to bullying at school.

After attending Fujiki's seminar, she told her daughter to stand up to teasing and bullying and it marked a positive turnaround for the girl in her school life, the woman said.

Alongside the seminars, Fujiki has also held informal dinner parties for women who have left domestic-violence shelters. It helps as they move on to a new life.

She plans to publish a new self-help book based on true stories from abused women she met at her lectures.

"I hope the book can give hints for improvement to people who are still agonized by domestic violence and others who like to support victims of such brutality," she said.

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