

Chapter 4

Body and Soul

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Troubles of mothers with babies

By Rumiko Itami, 40s, Kobe

Soon after the earthquake, I had trouble finding a place for my children to play. There were no children at parks. Because the air was polluted by the demolition work, I couldn't let my children out. There is no mask for babies. Both children and parents were stressed because they were stuck at home. They had no place to go to even on weekends. Many parents were worried about bringing up their children with very few kids around.

Taking refuge in their relatives' homes, some were anxious about going back to their collapsed houses. Their neighborhoods were burnt down. What kind of life is ahead of them in these surroundings?

Young mothers suffered severely because they had not been accustomed to child rearing and house chores, let alone in the aftermath of great disasters. It was dangerous for their children to stay inside where broken glass was scattered. For this reason, some thought it was better to move to the shelters with their children where food was provided.

In old cities, public bath houses that survived the quake resumed their business. Mothers couldn't endure a week without a bath, so they waited in line with their children for two hours during the daytime. It was chilly in January.

What did fathers do? If they stayed at home, most cleaned up houses and went to get water. When the aftershocks continued and a husband was at work, a mother panicked from pressure and anxiety about protecting her children. Some mothers haven't recovered from anxiety even six months later. Others recall the quake and feel uneasy even after they have resettled.

Bringing up a child has worried mothers in any era, but the quake made this anxiety worse. All in all, there are a surprising number of emotionally unstable mothers in Kobe City.

Anxieties of expectant mothers:

I wondered how pregnant women coped after the earthquake. I asked people living in Hyogo and Nagata wards of Kobe. Many seemed to have escaped to nearby evacuation centers or their relatives' houses right after the quake. Those who lived in partly-destroyed houses or apartments had experienced difficulties in getting water and cleaning. Regardless of their pregnancies, many expectant mothers went through

surprising situations.

- A: A woman who was seven months pregnant carried two buckets of water in both hands to the fifth floor.
- B: A woman who was three months pregnant walked from Hyogo Ward to Suma Ward because she was worried about her parents.
- C: A pregnant woman felt terribly lonely and anxious because there were aftershocks while her husband was on the job.
- D: A pregnant woman began to panic and became nervous when her husband was late coming home.
- E: A pregnant nurse cared for many people with bloody injuries. At that time, she considered the experience part of her job. Now that she is on maternity leave, she regularly suffers from nightmares.
- F: A pregnant woman felt uneasy when she went out and saw the streets and towns. Talking with her obstetrician relieved her but after a few weeks she feels anxious again.
- G: One day when a woman was feeding her baby, she felt an aftershock. Since then, whenever she feels the shaking from the demolition work, her heart pounds.
- H: A woman is worried about the malnutrition of her baby because she had only instant noodles after the earthquake.
- I: A mother couldn't get baby formula for her new born and began breast-feeding again.

It seemed that many young mothers couldn't cook, so they ate instant food and bread every day. Because it was impossible to get water with children around, some drove to the Water Works Bureau to get water at night. Most said that their husbands went for water.

Nursery schools had been closed for one or two months, during which mothers had to take care of their children at home. In the case where husbands couldn't get any days off, mothers had to consider this lack of interaction with their children.

Almost all expectant mothers worried about their babies' conditions. They seemed more concerned about their babies affected by the continual stress in everyday life after the quake than by the temporary shock.

Unfortunately, prenatal classes reopened in June (five months after the disaster) because public health centers were so busy treating the victims. A pregnant woman was concerned about not being able to receive a mother's pregnancy record and information booklet for the newborn because she wasn't six months pregnant. There wasn't enough information for these mothers and they were concerned about giving

birth. Some obstetric clinics opened prenatal classes. Meanwhile at emergency shelters, mothers were running short of disposable diapers and baby formula. They also had to call health centers for specific baby formula for allergic babies. They received supplies in about two days.

Public health officials announced that they would help expectant mothers with their concerns. If the appropriate information was released earlier, pregnant women's concerns would have been eased. They were eager to know how to get nursing goods, counseling services, and how to rebuild their collapsed houses. They also worried about the influences about the babies from the disaster, polluted air and lack of food.

The case of the pregnant woman, Ms A:

As there was danger of an imminent miscarriage, I quit my job and became hospitalized. I was supposed to move to a bigger hospital on January 17 because my fetus was immature. However, the earthquake struck Kobe the very morning I was going to move. The great shock triggered labor pains, and I left for the other hospital the next afternoon, the 18th. It usually takes us only 30 minutes to go there from our house, but on that day it took six hours. The hospital didn't serve any meals that day, so I was very hungry.

Due to stress, my baby didn't come out easily, after the loss of blood and amniotic fluid. The nurses seemed so busy that they didn't pay any attention to me. At around 7 p.m. on the fourth day after the quake, I couldn't endure the pain any longer. I grabbed a nurse who came to clear dishes after a meal, and I begged her to take me to a delivery room. As soon as I was on the delivery bed, my baby was born.

After I left the hospital, my baby was put in an incubator and stayed there for 26 days. It was very hard for me to go back and forth between my home and the hospital due to the traffic inconveniences. My husband had gone to his office and didn't come back. After I gave a birth, I was fatigued both mentally and physically. I was in a panic.

Just after the quake, the independent electric power plant at the hospital was out. Every baby was given a hot water pan. Because water was available in the hospital, patients from outside were carried in by ambulances. Patients' cases varied from a woman covered in blood after giving birth and a mother whose baby was taken to a different place to a baby in need of an artificial anus.

Subsequent aftershocks shook the third floor of the hospital, and mothers stood up every time the earth shook. At night, we all wept. Short of powdered mild and diapers, we formed a queue in front of a stand. At that time, a volunteer gave us chocolate. I will never forget how tasty it was.

The case of the pregnant woman Ms B:

I was hospitalized and given an intravenous drip at a hospital in an old part of Kobe because there was danger of having an imminent miscarriage. But I came back home earlier than I had expected. Two days later, the earthquake struck. The damage to the hospital was slight, only cracks on the wall, because the building was new. The nurses had to get water by themselves. Because the telephone lines were out, it turned out that some people couldn't contact the hospital for five days.

My house was in a suburb and had just been built. Water and electricity were all right. Very much shocked at the earthquake and the frequent aftershocks, I was afraid of being alone. Since I was in the stage before fetal movement, I had no way to tell whether or not the baby was alive. I panicked every time I thought about the baby.

Then I stayed at my sister's house near my home for six days, leaving my husband behind. I couldn't go see my doctor because transportation was not available. I went to see one near my sister's. It was confirmed that my unborn baby was safe and sound, yet I was eager to return to the other hospital. More than a month later, I was able to go there, and I finally felt at ease.

(Interviewed by Ruriko Itami)

Mothers with kids needed support – Child abuse increased:

After the quake, the number of counseling concerning child abuse increased. According to the Child Abuse Hotline in Osaka, the reported cases soared in the first two weeks after the quake. By the end of March there were 21 cases.

Some 104 cases were reported to a private counseling room in Kobe by the end of June. The cause was mental stress to mothers. Mothers ended up abusing their children when they felt stressed about life in the shelters. Feeling fatigued from tackling household chores with no electricity, running water or gas, mothers attacked their kids. Overwhelmed by the responsibility of taking care of the family when their husbands were absent, they shifted their stress on kids. Needless to say, mothers should have their husbands' cooperation in child care, and we ought to think about sending helpers to mothers with infants in this kind of great disaster.

The earthquake and sexual violence

By Reiko Masai, 40s, Kobe

The streets in Kobe were very dark for several months after the earthquake. A large number of houses were demolished and there were no streetlights. It was pitch

black at night. I wasn't surprised to hear about rape incidents here and there because nobody was on the street but we were surrounded by a lot of ruins. The Hyogo Prefecture Police reported no incidents of rape and insisted it was simply a rumor. I read no reports of rape in the newspapers. The citizens of Kobe were praised even by the foreign media for being patient and orderly. What was the reality? I would resent it if the rumors were true and many women were forced to bear it silently. If the rape incidents were forgotten as if nothing happened, women would be overwhelmed with grief.

We finally held a meeting in July, "We will fight against sexual violence: The earthquake and sexual violence." Various pieces of information were gathered, and we found that many rape cases had occurred beginning soon after the quake and lasting through March. Over 311 cases were reported in Kobe's Higashi-Nada Ward and surrounding areas. In the whole city of Kobe, the number of rape could have been two or three times higher than that of the report.

Women in their 20s on their way to school or workplaces were dragged into demolished houses and buildings. Most of these crimes were committed in groups. The criminals lured girls in by offering a bath tour. They skillfully planned this tour, preparing a wagon beforehand. It is not an exaggeration to say that rape can destroy a woman's heart. Two cases were reported to the police, but the police persuaded the women to forget about the incidents for the sake of their futures. I don't think their pain could be healed this way or the incidents could be forgotten.

I found no cases reported to public organizations. Visiting a clinic for counseling may have been hard for the rape victims.

I feel that privately-run relief centers for women with medical and mental care are absolutely necessary in this kind of disaster.

After the earthquake, we, the members of Women's Net Kobe, provided a telephone counseling service for women. Many complained that their husbands became violent after the quake.

For example, one couple's house, left with a 10-year bank loan, was burnt down to ashes. Since then, the husband has gotten drunk and physically abused his wife every night by hitting and kicking her. He even raped her. Appealing to us, the wife said, "I can't bear it. But am I a selfish woman?" I was tormented.

Because of the earthquake, men lost their jobs and became frustrated. I understand their situation, but it doesn't mean they can beat up their wives.

A family of five lives in a temporary house with two rooms and a kitchen. There are many such cases, and I understand that everyone becomes irritated. Even though

buildings are under construction after the quake, the economic recession is not improving. It is said that men cannot find jobs easily. In this prolonged situation, I am afraid that domestic violence will increase in small temporary houses. Wives don't have a shelter to run to as a way to escape their husbands. I believe that shelters with medical facilities and counseling services for women are desperately needed in all locations.

(Due to the quake, Women's House by Women's Net Kobe is now closed.)

Please understand the facts

By F.M., 40s, Suita

It all started with the massive earthquake that changed the lives of several hundred thousand people in an instant. In mid-March, public health nurse Ms. A told a shocking story at a meeting about rape cases in the makeshift shelters.

When we look back, sexual violence has occurred as a matter of course. We were preoccupied with news about the disaster or impressive stories of volunteers. Mass media also took up these stories, so we didn't pay any attention to the abused women and children.

After all the men had left for work, a man sneaked into a shelter in Kobe and raped a woman. A teacher who tried to stop the man was injured. A female student volunteer was dragged into a half-collapsed building and raped when she asked a man for directions. On the way to the toilet, some men touched girls on their breasts, even though the lights were on at night in the shelters. (There was no privacy in the shelters.) Children watched adults having sex, including rapes in the back of a gymnasium, at the corner of a warehouse or behind piles of relief goods.

Even when children were molested – touched or forced to remove their underwear – they didn't understand what was happening. Children became victims of sexual abuse. These incidents reportedly occurred in various shelters, especially relatively small ones with few leaders or volunteers on site. As a result, these cases were hidden from the public and the media. Even the children themselves couldn't speak out.

The prolonged life in makeshift shelters is being improved. Forced to live there, people become irritated and frustrated because they don't have families or relatives to depend on; they have no jobs; or they can't move into temporary houses. They target women and children to release their frustration. The number of rapes by acquaintances is surprisingly high. In other words, the weak are victimizing the weaker.

The society is filled with problems related to sex, such as crisis between

husbands and wives, sex among teenagers, pregnancy, child abuse, and STDs. Because these are private and delicate issues, women and children who encountered these incidents cannot cry out for help. If they reveal their agonies, their calm and ordinary lives could be threatened. They cannot tell their husbands. People pretend not to see the victims of sexual assaults. The victims have to bite their lips in vexation and keep silent for the sake of decency. And this allows the rapists to continue. It is a vicious circle. It is highly tragic. Can't we do anything to prevent these crimes?

Comfort women have voiced their cries 50 years after World War II, saying that now they don't have to force anyone to shoulder any burden. Do we have to make the abused women in this earthquake wait an extremely long half century to speak the truth?

We want to tackle the problem of sexual violence not temporarily but daily.
(From WANTED No. 18 July 8, 1995 issue)

Suddenly, from the darkness

By Rie Yanagawa, 40s, Himeji

Somebody snatches his prey by the backpack
A vinyl sheet covers her face
Suddenly, from the darkness
In an earthquake-torn town
Something strong grabs her arms
Can't see, can't breathe, can't scream
Her clothes are torn
Being nailed to the ground,
By so many invincible, violent hands,
She hears the panting, moaning of wild animals
Like a road kill
Leaving her coated in mud, saliva and semen
In the darkness
The laughter left in the darkness as they walk away
"Am I already dead?
I don't know if I'm alive."
Listen to her voiceless cry.

I want to know a little about my neighbors' sex life

By M.N., 20s, Kobe

How did humans' sexual desire function in the midst of confusion? The love hotels in the outskirts of the city seemed to be very prosperous. People didn't go there for laundry, did they? They didn't make love in the shelters because there was no privacy. Rather, the people in tents could maintain their privacy. Some couples went back to their half-destroyed houses to make love.

At that time, it was considered indiscreet for women in the disaster-stricken areas to put on accessories or dress up. Some women thought sex was out of the question. The biggest reason was probably that they didn't feel sanitary because they couldn't take a bath and they just didn't feel like having sex anyway.

A lot of men, on the other hand, cried out, "I wanna fuck!" Was it their instinct to spread their genes during this critical situation? Or did they just want to get rid of their frustration?

Having a puppet play to comfort children

By Mitsuko Amano, 50s, Nishinomiya

Soon after the quake on February 11 in Takarazuka, a puppet show was performed by a puppet troupe "Kurarute." The play was scheduled as a routine theater meeting for parents and children, but this time children in the disaster-stricken area were invited to see the performance.

The puppets onstage asked the children, "How did you feel about the earthquake?" They said in chorus, "I was scared," "It was very cold," or "I cried." About 500 parents and children watched the one-hour drama earnestly. The theater was filled with loud cheers and laughter. Some mothers said, "I laughed out loud for the first time since the quake."

We had been creating opportunities for children to enjoy live theater dramas, music, traditional plays. It is very important for kids to grow up open-mindedly, and they need to learn from these dramas and their experiences in real life. However, this earthquake made it more difficult for us to lead ordinary lives.

We were very busy rebuilding our lives even when we were still frightened of aftershocks. But we began to think about what we could do now, acknowledging the circumstances. Then theatrical and musical groups proposed their performances, intended to help victims. We tried to pass on their kind offers to the children. We made spaces in the school shelters, nursery schools, community halls, parks and other possible places for the performers.

About 70 shows took place from mid-February to early April. Children enjoyed them tremendously. I think that they wanted to have the opportunity to be free from

stress. It seemed that the adults were encouraged by the looks on the faces of their children.

In Hyogo Prefecture, festivals were cancelled to show sympathy for the victims. It is true that victims have fears, stress and strains. However, they need the opportunity to relax in the disaster aftermath. I learned that during the last two months' activities.

The kind of reconstruction we can pursue is to resume the routine activities that will relieve our stress. The day will soon come, I'm sure.

Swimming is not just a hobby

By Yoshiko Azuma, 40s, Kobe

Just when a month had passed since the January 17 earthquake, I got a pain in my hip joints. It is not because I overused them but because I didn't use them.

I cannot walk on the street for a long time because it puts weight on my joints. Therefore, I used to go to the swimming pool twice a week for the past 10 years. I don't get tired in the swimming pool because my weight doesn't strain my joints in the water, no matter how long I walk. But I was not able to go to the pool after the earthquake. All the swimming pools were closed.

It is impossible for me to stop the pain. Even though I take baths and keep my hip joints warm, I realize that my muscular strength has become weak.

Since I got frightened that I might not be able to walk any more, I made a telephone call to the pool I used to go to.

I asked, "When will you open the swimming pool?"

She said, "We have a serious situation here. We can't be talking about a swimming pool right now. We don't know when we will open again."

Oh, well, I knew I shouldn't have called. She probably thought I was imprudent. I fell into self-hatred, but then several swimming friends called me and they also complained of a pain in their legs.

Two weeks later, I called the pool again. I got the same reply. But I didn't give up easily this time. With all my might, I appealed to them that swimming was not just an amusement for my friends and me, and that our muscular strength would never recover once we lost it.

She told me, "We understand what you're saying. But it's impossible for us to open the pool now. Please go to other public pools that are open." I knew I couldn't make myself understood. I called them again because I can't go to other swimming pools because they have stairs. I phone them because I had pain in my hip joints. Swimming

is not a pastime for me. I can no longer practice self-discipline.

After having a conflict with my mother, I came to learn who I really am

By M.N., 20s, Kobe

I came back to my house after having stayed at an evacuation center for four days and at my friend's for a week. On the day of the quake, I informed my mother of my safety with effort due to damaged telecommunications. She was very worried about me, even after my frequent calling, because getting through to Kobe residents on the phone from other areas was terribly difficult.

I was mentally unstable, thinking that I might die at any moment. More than 10 days had passed since the quake. I was in a distracted state of mind when I arrived home. Consequently, my brain seemed vacant and had no room for emotional clash.

Because my mother had been living alone, she became talkative whenever I came home. She talked about one thing after another when I came home this time too. She started saying, "Kobe was cursed because of reckless development." And she kept asking me, "What are you going to do now?" I became depressed and panicked instead of soothed by coming back home. Even then, my mother demanded that I as a daughter understand her motherly worry. She became hysterical and finally hit me.

Since that incident, I became mentally stressed. The fear of another earthquake recurred. Finally, on a snowy day, I escaped from my mother's house. I simply wanted her to leave me alone until I was ready to accept the reality. I couldn't help thinking it was impossible for somebody who didn't share the earthquake experience to understand my feelings.

I returned to Kobe where I believed I could find a place to rest my wounded mind. I gradually accepted reality by chatting with a lot of my girlfriends and co-workers and by joining volunteer activities even though life in Kobe was extremely inconvenient and stressful.

I was often troubled by nightmares. When I dreamt that my mother was trying to kill me, I woke up by my own shriek. Even though I understand her concern for me, I can't forgive her yet. Half a year has already passed and I wonder if the day of reconciliation will come.

Now I can think, decide and choose everything by myself. This happened as soon as I stopped being a "good daughter." The quake has destroyed everything and has also broken my armor to pieces. I at last feel like I have captured what kind of a person I really am.

Please listen to an SOS of our bodies

By Yoshie Kashima, 20s, Kobe

I would like to present some stories of people who experienced the earthquake, including my own, regarding the earthquake and a woman's body.

A woman in her 40s in Kobe had her period on the day of the earth tremor, and she had the most bleeding on that day. What's worse is that she had excessive bleeding because of endometriosis. At the shelter, she had to spend the day with diapers, which she got from a nearby hospital. "In this life threatening situation, I didn't have a full control over myself. I was so upset and at a loss," she said to me as she recalled the day.

Another woman in her 20s in Amagasaki was taking hormones for her endometriosis. On that day she was going to visit her doctor to get more of them. Because of the earthquake, she couldn't go to the doctor. So she managed to get the same kind of hormones from her acquaintance since they were not sold at ordinary drugstores.

She had to take the medicine three times a day at a fixed time for half a year. She couldn't even miss once. She was enduring various side effects from this medicine. Apart from that, this medicine is also expensive. Discontinuation meant all her efforts would be wasted.

On the day of the quake, I was traveling on vacation, so I don't know about the actual disaster. Living in Kakogawa, I now feel the aftershocks – about three on the Japanese intensity scale. Therefore, there wasn't so much direct influence on my body. I was just concerned about aftershocks. I never experienced an unbalanced physical condition caused by the quake.

I was also undergoing treatment for endometriosis. Because my doctor's clinic in Kobe City was destroyed by the quake, he could no longer prescribe hormones for me. In this way, I could say that I was indirectly affected by the quake.

Having finished one stage of the hormone treatment, I wasn't worried about not being able to find the medicine. I stopped the treatment until the clinic reopened in May. It was necessary for me to go to the clinic regularly, but I couldn't easily change my doctor. It is hard to visit a gynecologist and to explain about my condition from the beginning.

I was afraid of a rapid change in my condition during the waiting period because my ovary had once swelled suddenly after I stopped the hormone treatment. Also, as a side effect of the treatment, there are liver problems. My liver was no exception and at the end of the treatment I tend to suffer from liver malfunction.

I can't judge my internal organs. When some symptoms of ovaries and liver

illness appear, the condition is usually worsening. So I am especially worried whenever I feel sick. In fact, two months after the quake, I broke out in a rash. I suspected that my liver wasn't working well.

I think that the people who needed long-term care were at a loss during the disaster.

The above stories are about women who have the same illness. When I think about the women who had their periods during the disaster, especially near the epicenter, I can't help sympathizing with them.

According to the report by Women's Center in Osaka, when a woman experiences a trauma, her bodily function – especially her hormone balance – is distracted. A woman's body is so delicate that even a quarrel with her husband can cause her to stop ovulation. Therefore, it is natural for a woman's body to be affected by the quake.

In April, a public health nurse who was in charge of a counseling service said that the number of visits was not so high, though a few complained about menstrual disorder. She said, "Women don't have time to think about their own health because they are too busy trying to reconstruct their routine."

Six months have passed since the quake, and I think that we will soon feel irregularity of our physical and mental conditions. Mental care is important after this kind of disaster. We must catch warning signs of our physical condition, and we should take a rest or undergo treatment to recover our health.

The toilet situation in the shelters

By M.N., 20s, Kobe

Toilet stories are somewhat explicit, but they are inevitable in our daily lives.

In the toilet at the shelter where I stayed for some time, there was a heap of feces. It was filthy, and the disgusting smell was unearthly. It was nauseating, so I used the toilet with my eyes closed, tissues in my nostrils and my breath held. "I wish I were a man," I said to myself.

Every shelter seemed to face a similar situation. A lot of women refrained from drinking water, so that they would not have to use washrooms.

As a result, many got bladder infections, urethritis, and candidiasis. They used wet tissues or sanitary napkins to stay clean.

What has changed? – feelings from the bottom of my heart

By Hisako Sasaki, 40s, Akashi

Two months have passed since the earthquake. What has changed?

Today, all of the Japan Railways lines resumed operation. The windowpanes of my house were fixed. Yesterday, the roof was repaired. The surroundings have been changing. Little by little.

But there is something that I don't want to forget.

Please leave me alone. I know very well that you are worried about me. I want to be alone and spaced out for a while after the traumatic experience.

"How are you?" "Are you all right?" "Are you fine?"

Every day the telephone rings. Sometimes it becomes a dangerous weapon. I want to shut my ears to the bell, which rings relentlessly. When I am tired and depressed, the telephone causes me more trouble than it is worth. I would rather receive a letter of sympathy in this situation.

I am just watching television, pulling a quilt over myself. I shed tears of frustration, but I can't do anything.

"Let's help support the victims."

"Will you supply emergency food?"

"Please write a report on your experience after you saw the stricken area."

Why do you ask me? Volunteer activities must not be forced. Moved by heartfelt feelings, one can stand and help others. That's volunteering. But after the quake, I couldn't take action.

I decided to go to the town in ruins. It seemed to me that everything was a dream.

Thousands of people were killed mercilessly. It is too painful to think about these souls one by one. Therefore, I don't dare think deeply about them. Some day, some years later, the town will be reconstructed. But what will change? What has changed?

I have something that I don't want to forget.

Aiming at stress free – as a public health nurse

By Akiko Akamatsu, 50s, Miki

Three months have passed since the quake. We can't say that our future has become certain, but it seems that people's lives have regained rhythm. Rather than reviving their stable lives, they may have simply resigned themselves and become disinterested or restrained.

One day in April, a 47-year-old woman visited our public health center for counseling. She said her menstruation had stopped since the beginning of January. She said sorrowfully, "I have already begun menopause, haven't I?" Her hair and her face

have lost their shine. I explained to her that a shock or panic could cause menstrual irregularity or pause. Because of this quake, the number of pregnant women in their 40s and 50s has increased. The reason seems to be that their menstruation became irregular and they lost track of when to prevent conception.

I advised her to visit a gynecologist when her life becomes normal. Again she said painfully, "It is not menopause, is it?" Then I said to her, "If you have started your menopause, how do you feel about it?" She said, sobbing, "I won't be a woman anymore. That is sad."

Our conversation gradually shifted to menopause age, not the non-menstruation caused by the earthquake. It was time for me to close the counseling room, so I said to her, "Please come back after you get the results from a medical check-up."

Two or three days later, a college female student called in. Sobbing, she said she was raped on the previous night. Her apartment was destroyed so she lived in a makeshift shelter. I tried to find out the details, but it was not appropriate over a pay phone. She was so upset that she couldn't make herself understood. In the course of our conversation, the connection was cut off several times because she ran out of coins. Over the intermittent telephone talks, I couldn't give her good advice, so I introduced only the first-aid treatment.

She needs to consult a doctor about a medical examination of external injuries, pregnancy and STD. The question was whether or not the clinic could properly treat her psychological damage in a way that she wouldn't have to experience a "second rape" committed by doctors and counselors. I gave her the names of a few doctors from my limited indexes. I would have hugged her if she had been in front of me.

These two cases might have happened, regardless of the earthquake. But we can easily imagine that the number of these incidents increased due to the quake. Weaker people are susceptible to the effects of such disasters.

For example, as far as housing is concerned, almost all old wooden houses collapsed, and many poor, elderly people and young students lived in those houses. Rich people lived in strong houses, and they could cope with the disaster.

When we think about men and women, women are forced to do household chores and inclined to worry about things much more than men. And rape is nothing but men's tyrannical behavior.

I strongly felt that through this earthquake we should make a new order that supports disadvantaged people such as women, disabled and elderly people.

Now people are beginning to undergo mental care to recover from shock and to be free from stress. I hope that as many people as possible will obtain information about it.

My experience as a doctor in the shelters

By Chieko Hayashi, 40s, Kobe

My clinic was half destroyed, so I made rounds in the shelters. People in the shelters felt great stress, and a lot of women suffered from irregular menstruation or a loss of menstruation. Many people became constipated because they couldn't use the bathrooms freely. In the shelters, they could rarely change their underwear. Some women had genital infections or bled excessively, having to use the same sanitary napkins for hours at a time. A lack of nutrition (protein) caused them to get vaginitis or cystitis, and they easily caught colds due to the lack of resistance. Until this disaster we had never lived a life without water, so women have seldom bled from ulceration. But the catastrophe caused some women to experience this.

For gynecological treatment an internal examination unit is necessary, so I couldn't examine anyone in the shelters. What I could do was introduce available hospitals and advise women to buy ointments at open drugstores.

We, the doctors, made it a rule to visit the same shelters once a week, but it seemed that gynecological consultations were unexpectedly few. Many women seemed to have been very busy getting food or water, so their health problems were deferred. My clinic opened in June, and the clinical equipment was gradually repaired. My patients said that they could at last think about their health because their lives and families have been taken care of.

In June, I finally started counseling. I held a lot of counseling sessions about sex until the earthquake. Since then I have noticed that many patients have not been coping with the changes in their family relationships. They had their life plans, but by the life-threatening event some unexpected couplings and separations happened. Their plans completely changes. Needless to say, a human relationship doesn't work well without accepting unexpected changes. Because of such circumstances, some suffered from insomnia or became irritable. Their hearts began to palpitate. At the slightest sound their bodies trembled throbbing heartbeats didn't stop after a faint tremble. Others complained of difficulty breathing.

In the early morning they could not sleep well. A woman was awakened suddenly, shaking and tossing and turning in bed. Another woman said that she couldn't take sleeping pills because she was afraid of not waking up if earthquake

happened again.

Soon after the quake, some fell into a manic state. As life settled down day by day, they became depressed. They lost vigor or motivation to survive, and that resulted in various symptoms.

A woman got a bladder infection because she couldn't take a bath on cold winter days. Since she was always fearful of infection, she ended up contracting a neurotic bladder infection. Even though several medical check-ups showed her bladder was not infected, she said she felt like urinating all the time.

It is said that during World War II some women didn't have their periods. A similar situation seemed to occur this time, though the problem seemed not as severe. A woman's body is more susceptible to stress than a man's. At the first stage, women have irregular menstruation or their periods stop. If they take care of themselves at this stage, they won't get serious diseases. Even then, it is hard to diagnose their symptoms after menopause.

In summer, the number of counseling sessions related to rape generally rises. The number of rape cases this summer soared since last summer. I heard women were dragged into secluded areas of shelters or molested, if not raped, in dark corners at night. I also heard that some women went through unbearable feelings by being sexually harassed in hidden spots of the shelters. When men became psychologically fatigued and frustrated, they tended to get intoxicated and say obscenities toward women.

I heard that senior high school students or college students were targeted. Some were dragged into abandoned houses and raped. Some were almost lugged into vacant rooms or buildings when only few passers-by were on the streets. A student was abducted and raped in a car passing on a dark street. All I could do was to listen to their stories. I hope that these women will not suffer from problems related to their sexuality in the future.

Of course, we all hope that this kind of big earthquake will not happen again. Throughout this experience, I felt that I was incapable of helping my injured neighbors because my clinic is far away from my house and no big hospitals are located nearby. At the shelters in the schools, there were only first aid kits, with which I was able to treat the children's minor injuries. I thought that resuscitation equipment, suture instruments and intravenous drip instruments would have been useful if they had been provided at schools. There are always a few doctors living in every town. If schools have this equipment or such instruments, doctors could properly treat injuries for emergency. A shelter must be designated as the place where emergency treatment is given.

I plan to keep some emergency medical equipment in my house. Before the earthquake, I always thought ambulances would bring everything. This time ambulances were not able to come to certain places. Watching the press helicopters, I wished they would drop medical equipment. At my clinic, patients' charts were scattered everywhere as if they were blended in a mixer, and the data in my computer completely disappeared. Fortunately, my clinic follows the separation of dispensary from medical practice, so I could still go to the pharmacy to get my patients' medical information from their prescriptions. I learned the importance of keeping patients' charts in separate places.

Even though we proceed to reconstruct the roads and buildings, it will take time for us to recover the wounded hearts. I would like to look at the bright side of the situation, though. I had been advocating the importance of sex education and I noticed junior and senior high school students taking care of babies in the shelters. Becoming more like big brothers or sisters than ever, they seemed to understand how important it is to help or feel for others. I believe that this experience will benefit them in the future. (Interviewed by Masako Yamazaki)

Investigation report on evacuees' situation:

By Victims Association of Hyogo Prefecture

October 27, 1995

The trends show that evacuation life had a stronger mental and physical influence on women than men, and that the influence is stronger still on the younger generation.