

## A Wife`s Anxiety About Her Perceived Duty to Her Husband

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I came across Mrs. Tsai during a four-day Logic-Based Therapy session. She is my partner in our pair work. She is quite familiar with this therapy session, so I asked her to give me as many details as possible about her problems in order to track down her irrational premises and furthermore refute the premises which led her to her fallacies.

Here is Mrs. Tsai`s information:

Mrs. Tsai`s family is well respected in Taiwan. She is a retired teacher who is now living with her husband (who is one of the senior executives of the government). Both of their sons are doctors. Mrs. Tsai had planned either to go on a trip abroad with her friends after retirement or invite them over to her place in the countryside. Many of her friends have known about it and have been looking forward to it. By the time she retired, she actually took the initiative to invite her friends both on a trip abroad and to her place in the countryside. However, she refused all of them when they finally asked the dates to come over. She was confused by her own ambivalence.

In Mrs. Tsai`s report, there is no clear objects of her emotions. However, I tried to identify the people or the things mentioned the most in her report in order to find out who or what is behind the contradictions in her ambivalent thinking. It is obvious that this reported event is linked strongly to an image of “home,” which is relevant to both going on a trip and inviting her friends over. This is because both of these activities have to do with her “home.” Both leaving and inviting friends to her house bothers her, so I hypothesized that, “home”, an abstract term, represents a higher order object of her anxiety, and within it, I believe, there might be concealed a concrete object. In this case, we`ll have to find the concrete object first in order to make a connection with this higher order object; and the concrete object will be one derived from the higher order object.

Though her husband hasn't once been mentioned when Mrs. Tsai described her confusions in the report, he is the only one who lives with her at present, so I thought that her husband might be the object of her anxiety. The following dialogue is conducted to check my hypothesis that Mrs. Tsai's husband is the root of her anxiety.

Counselor (A): It is certainly not an easy job raising two sons who both became doctors. We see that you're dedicated to your sons' education.

Are you free of being concerned for them?

Mrs. Tsai (B): of course.

A: It seems that you're still having strong affection toward your husband. Do you travel or participate in any kind of activities together?

B: We have very different interests. He likes to play golf and enjoys social engagements, but I'm more of a nature lover, I prefer simple activities. Moreover, my husband and his friends love parties, he usually comes home late.

A: How do you feel about it?

B: I'm quite worried that he might have a car accident. It's on the news every day, you know.

A: And this bothers you?

B: Yes, indeed.

The dialogue proved that my hypothesis was right; the assumed object of Mrs. Tsai's anxiety is actually Mrs. Tsai's husband. Mrs. Tsai feels powerless being unable to control her husband, which leads her to conclude that something bad might happen to her husband if she goes on the trip with her friends. According to the premises, the syllogism would be:

(Major premise) If I leave home for a trip, I won't be able to keep an eye on my husband, and something bad might happen to him.

(Report) I'm going on a trip.

(Conclusion) I won't be able to keep an eye on my husband, and something bad might happen to him.

However, what is the connection between "home" and "husband"? This is the most challenging part of this case study. There isn't a single word mentioned in this report about anything that's linked to Mrs. Tsai's husband. In this case I hypothesized that Mrs. Tsai's husband is the suppressed object of Mrs. Tsai's emotions. Once the suppressed object is clarified, the root of Mrs. Tsai's emotional reasoning emerged. I made an assumption that the image of "home" and "husband" overlap, and it implies that the image of husband represents that of home to Mrs. Tsai. However, it is "home" that was being mentioned in the report instead of her husband; therefore, it's reasonable to infer that the image of "home" is more important to Mrs. Tsai.

To confirm this inference, I asked Mrs. Tsai a few questions about her own family, and discovered several problems which bother her deeply. The truth is that she feels powerless in improving the conditions of her original family because of the adverse encounters of her brother and their relationships with her parents. Her parents failed to establish a caring family that provided her the sense of security and warmth, which made her all the more eager to form an affectionate family after getting married. Therefore, we can tell from the career of both her sons and husband that she is dedicated to her family, which appears to be perfect in every way to an outsider. However, the task of maintaining this ideal image of home strangles her; she longs for an escape from the suffocation but wants to protect her ideal image of home from breaking apart.

She felt obliged to keep everyone safe from any danger and wanted to eliminate every possibility that could cause a breach in her family. Now since Mrs. Tsai lives with her husband, she is experiencing anxiety about going on a trip or inviting friends over because both of the activities somehow are related to her home and implicate her husband. In other words, everything that affects her home affects her husband.

It's apparent there is a higher order syllogism implied here. The following conversation took place, from which I was able to derive further details in order to construct this syllogism:

A: So, you will be worrying about your husband if you go on a trip?

B: Yes.

A: But it should be just fine if your friends come over, shouldn't it?

B: Well, I figured that he might find my friends disturbing. (She hesitated when answering this question.)

A: So you care about how he feels?

B: Yes.

A: That is, you are concerned about what he cares about?

B: Yes.

A: That is why you must pay close attention to everything he does, right?

B: Yes.

A: That is to say, you can't let anything happen that might make him feel bad, right?

B: I think so.

A: Your home will be ruined if anything bad happens to your husband, right?

B: Of course.

We can tell from this dialogue that Mrs. Tsai's husband is the symbol of her home; Her home exists when her husband exists; Her family is sound and happy whenever her husband is happy. It is clear that the value of "home" to Mrs. Tsai depends on her husband, and the root of her anxiety comes from the demand to have a perfect family; in other words, what she really wanted to say was that in order to sustain the perfect family, she has to pay close attention all the time to her husband. The following inference is exactly how her fallacy is formed:

(Major Premise Rule 3) My home will be ruined if anything bad happens to my husband.

(Bridging premise) If I don't control how my husband is doing or feeling at all times, something bad might happen to my husband.

(Major Premise Rule2) If I don't control how my husband is doing or feeling at all times, my home might be ruined.

(Report) I won't be able control how my husband is doing or feeling at all times if I go on a trip or have friends over to my place.

(Conclusion) If I go on a trip or have friends over to my place then my home might be ruined.

(Major Premise Rule 3) I must not go on a trip or have friends over to visit if my home might be ruined.

(Conclusion) I must not go on a trip or have friends over to visit.

Mrs. Tsai remained silent after reviewing the above inferences, but soon the sad or questioning look in her eyes softened, followed by a trusting smile and laughter. It seemed like she felt ridiculous about her attachment to her husband (home). This reaction enabled me to prescribe an antidote to her refuted premises—the anxiety aroused by dutiful worrying and the catastrophic reasoning about her husband; that is , Mrs. Tsai's cardinal fallacy comes from

Demanding Perfection for her home, which leads her to a lack of Metaphysical Security. As a result, what we're discussing here are ways to help Mrs. Tsai develop the ability to speculate and take risks prudently, and it is Courage that can help build her Metaphysical Security.

To dispute Mrs. Tsai's fallacious inference in maintaining a perfect home, I took the premise that life is fugacious to make her understand that death is inevitable and all we can do is to experience the happiness in every moment. This statement turned out to be a cliché for Mrs. Tsai, so I talked to her about unconditional love. I took her own husband as an example to explain how no one can be utterly free of accidents, including herself. She herself could be the one to die first. She accepted my advice with pleasure and promised to start doing some homework afterwards such as visualizing her childhood in meditation or reading books about aging, sickness and death, and even participating in religious activities.

During the time in which I counseled Mrs. Tsai, I could tell that she was a little defensive and unwilling to confide in me, but, conversely, needed help. As problems became clear, Mrs. Tsai had to face the facts, which caused her anxiety. She smiled eventually about her problem, a sign of relief, or simply because her anxieties were finally understood. We are both very pleased about the end result.

I've never taken any class in psychology or consultancy. Mrs. Tsai is the first case I've ever come across. During my research on the individual case and my courses, I deeply rejoiced to have chosen qualitative research for my master degree. It took me four years to complete my master's thesis, for it demanded a great amount of reading on philosophy and transpersonal psychology, and I spent time on the analysis of verbatim records of individual cases. But it is worthwhile; the efficiency was satisfactory when I analyzed Mrs. Tsai's case, my first individual case through dialogues with her; and within just an hour, I identified the problems of my case

and prescribed the right antidote to it. I'm truly astounded by the practical and effective means provided by Logic-Based Therapy (LBT).