

Post Traumatic Growth Information Sheet

“The wound is the place where the Light enters you.” —Rumi

What is it? - *Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is this form of positive change that people experience as a result of struggling with major life crises or a traumatic event. PTG can be considered an outcome as well as a process. It is about maintaining a sense of hope that not only can a person who has experienced trauma survive but they can also experience positive life changes as a result.*

Why is it important?

- For persons seeking help – the majority of persons seeking help for a substance use condition have experienced trauma. Understanding that there is potential for growth is important for healing.
- For helpers – Vicarious trauma, secondary trauma and compassion fatigue can have an impact on helpers, and understanding post traumatic growth can help helpers stay vital.

The Five Domains of a Post Traumatic Growth Inventory:

1. **Relating to Others** - People coping with trauma “discover both the worst and best in others”
2. **New Possibilities** - When illness pushes us to accept that “what is” is different than what we may wish for, we start looking for potentialities in what remains of our abilities.
3. **Personal Strength** - People living with chronic illness often discover we are stronger than we imagined. We develop a sense of pride in facing the challenges chronic illness presents, living the paradox, “I am vulnerable, yet stronger.”
4. **Spiritual Change** - People living with chronic illness grapple with existential questions regarding suffering, mortality and the meaning of life. Our philosophies of life are often deeply developed and personally satisfying.
5. **Appreciation of Life** - Those of us who live with chronic illness often are profoundly aware of the importance of life’s “small moments.” We tend not to take for granted pleasurable experiences, “experiencing life at a deeper level of awareness.”

Sources: [Tedeschi, R.G., Calhoun, L.G., & Groleau, J.M. \(2015\). Clinical applications of posttraumatic growth. In S. Joseph \(Ed.\), Positive psychology in practice: Promoting human flourishing in work, health, education and everyday life. \(pp. 503-518\). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.](#)

[Tedeschi, R.G. & Calhoun, L.G. \(1996\). The posttraumatic growth inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 9\(3\), 455-471.](#)

Fostering Post Traumatic Growth:

- **See yourself from a strengths-based perspective** - shifting away from “what is wrong with you” to “what has happened to you.”
- **Find “good groups”** - those in which we can tell the truth, not only our own but the truth about the group itself.
- **Look for meaning** – seek positive elements within your work and life.
- **Create Space for Creativity** - engage curiosity, discovery, and spontaneity which can then be channeled into generating new roles and an identity grounded in strength.
- **Embrace new opportunities** – look within both the personal and the professional fronts.
- **Spend time with people you love** – Seek to improve personal relationships and increased pleasure derived from being around people we love.
- **Get in touch with Gratitude** – Develop a heightened sense of gratitude toward life.

Interesting Research Articles

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) & recovery from addiction – (2017) European Journal of Psychotraumatology - [LINK](#)

- Studies have shown that 30–70% of individuals report positive outcomes subsequent to a traumatic event
- The changes that an individual needs to make during recovery, in terms of spirituality and values, echo PTG
- This study indicates that although addiction, and recovery from addiction, are processes that are related to adversity, they can also result in positive psychological outcomes. Addiction-related growth as a concept allows for a better understanding of these positive changes, and how they are related to social support and treatment type.

Secondary traumatic stress, vicarious posttraumatic growth, and coping among health professionals; A comparison study – (April 2016) New Zealand Journal of Psychology - [Link Here](#)

- Overall, these results suggest that those health professionals who are at the greatest risk of developing Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) are also the most likely to benefit from vicarious posttraumatic exposure (VPTG), and that these professionals tend to engage in a moderate level of coping.
- Results suggest that the use of self-care in one's personal and professional life, social support from friends and family, peer social support, and humor may be coping strategies health professionals can use to reduce the chance of STS and enhance the likelihood of VPTG.

Personal growth often coexists with post-traumatic stress following natural disasters – (2017) University of Missouri-Columbia - [LINK](#)

- Researchers have found that survivors of natural disasters have the potential to experience positive changes or growth in addition to the stress they experience.
- Communication between people who experienced the tornado and their families, friends and neighbors was related to more post-traumatic growth among survivors
- A takeaway is that mental health providers can help foster growth by promoting connections and communication among survivors in long-term, post-disaster communities.

Rumination in posttraumatic stress and growth after a natural disaster: a model from northern Chile 2014 Earthquake – (2016) European Journal of Psychotraumatology - [Link](#)

- Role of subjective severity, change of basic beliefs, social sharing of emotion, and rumination on posttraumatic stress and growth were modeled from responses of people affected by the April 12, 2014, northern Chilean earthquakes.
- Posttraumatic stress goes through negative changes in basic beliefs, intrusive rumination, and deliberated rumination.
- Post-traumatic growth is achieved from positive changes in basic beliefs and deliberated rumination.
- Deliberated rumination and moving from intrusive to deliberated rumination appear as cornerstones in posttraumatic processing.

Blog Articles on Post Traumatic Growth

- *The Coronavirus and Post-Traumatic Growth* by Steve Taylor, April 2020 – [Link Here](#)
- *Why We Need to Know About Post-Traumatic Growth* by Nora Ishibashi, Ph.D., Naomi Parrella M.D, June 2020 – [Link Here](#)
- *Post-Traumatic Growth From the Corona Virus - Finding Hope* by Beth Tyson, March 2020 - [Link Here](#)
- *Chronic Illness and Post-Traumatic Growth Finding light in the darkness* by Katie Willard Virant MSW, JD, LCSW, November 2019 – [Link Here](#)
- *Posttraumatic Growth There can be positive change after adversity* by Adena Bank Lees, LCSW, April 2019 – [Link Here](#)
- *Post-Traumatic Growth: Finding Meaning and Creativity in Adversity Resilience and strength can often be attained through unexpected routes*, by Scott Barry Kaufman on April 20, 2020 – [Link Here](#)

