

Brutally Honest Optimism

Optimism reduces our sense of helplessness when things feel out of control. It also allows motivates us to take constructive action. However this is not the Pollyanna, unicorns and rainbows, "everything's going to be okay" brand of optimism - it is tempered by the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of our current reality.

Perception of Control Over Events

What makes an experience traumatic is that we were not able to control the circumstances that led to us being harmed in some way. Recovery is about regaining control through primary control (taking action to change a situation) or secondary control (changing our orientation to a situation).

4 Factors Leading to Post-Traumatic Growth

Coping Style

What is your coping style? Do you immediately start problem-solving (active coping) or do you escape into a fantasy world (avoidance coping)? Both approaches can be helpful, but in the long term, avoidance turns into denial, which prevents you from ever truly living in the present because you are so busy stuffing down your past. The best predictor of post-traumatic growth is 'acceptance and positive reinterpretation' - a coping style characterized by optimism and humor.

Strong Sense of Self

Having a strong sense of self depends on having a purpose in life, high self-esteem, and being able to create a coherent narrative. Without being able to make sense of our story, we cannot integrate it, learn from it, or get a distance from it. A coherent narrative prevents us from unconsciously repeating the lack of connection we experienced with our parents in our relationship with our own children.

Post-Traumatic Growth



5 Domains of Post-Traumatic Growth

Personal Strength

- Stronger for the experience
- Better able to handle blows
- More wisdom and maturity

Closer Relationships

- Strengthened social ties - can rely on people
- Help craft trauma narratives that contribute to meaning
- Sense of belonging
- Unity

Greater Appreciation for Life

- Greater gratitude, hope, kindness, leadership, love, spirituality, and teamwork

New Possibilities

- Reprioritize values and time commitments
- Accomplish goals that would have been delayed
- More understanding of friends and family

Spiritual Development

- Readjust spiritual beliefs to encompass trauma, or
- Revise spiritual beliefs altogether