

The official mascot of 2020:

Always wears a mask.

Compulsively washes hands.

Avoids all contact with humans

Posttraumatic Growth

David Sharp, PhD



Definition of Trauma

- Exposure to actual or threatened harm
 - Directly
 - Witnessed
 - Learned about the trauma of a family member or close friend
 - Repeated exposure or extreme exposure to aversive details of events



Trauma Can Lead to Cognitive Reassessments

- How empathetic and caring people in general are
- How safe and predictable my life is
- How safe and predictable my world is
- How vulnerable I actually am
- How much autonomy I actually have



Posttraumatic Growth (PTG)

Defined as a process, an outcome, or both. It is the way in which a person, persons, or community can benefit from the struggle with their new reality after traumatic events

- Incorporates identity with cultural and environmental influences
- By engaging with our struggle, we have the opportunity change or develop the “meaning” of our life
 - Wisdom
 - Resilience
 - Gratitude



Not a New Concept

“But we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces character”

Romans 5:5

“Even his griefs are a joy, long after, to one that remembers all that he wrought and endured”

Homer, *The Odyssey*

“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger”

Kelly Clarkson, *Stronger*

First described as “Stren Conversion” in 1974¹

¹Finkel, NJ (1974) Strens and trauma: An attempt at categorization. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 2. 265-273



Watershed Events

An event marking a unique or important change of course or one in which important developments depend

Can be Cultural/Global

- Small pox vaccine
- Printing press
- Black Plague

Can be personal

- Divorce
- Car accident
- Heart attack



Black Plague in England

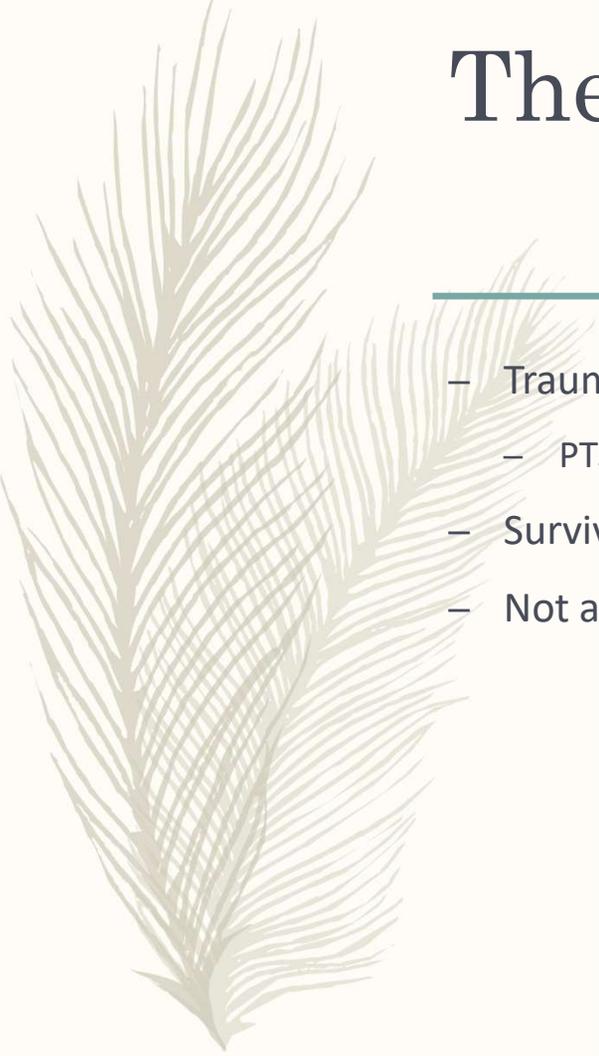
Plague years

- 1592
- 1603
- 1606
- 1609

Shakespeare Works

- Richard III (~1592)
- Othello (~1604)
- King Lear (~1606)
- Macbeth (~1606)
- Cymbeline (~1610)

Between 1603 and 1613, theatres in London were closed for a grand total of 78 months



The Process of PTG

- Trauma creates PTSD, interacting with the stress and trauma encourages PTG
 - PTSD and PSG coexist
- Survive first, grow second
- Not all routes are linear and not all paths are the same



Changing the Framing

As health professionals

- Can we see people as strong rather than broken while acknowledging that both words require a struggle?
- Can we accept that trauma may not come from COVID but rather all of the other elements of a persons life?
- Can we find ways to facilitate growth and turn strength into service for our community?



Commonly Associated Changes from PTG^{1,2}

The five domains

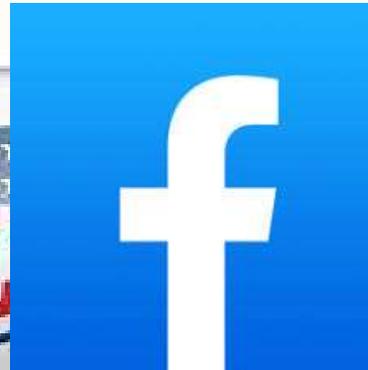
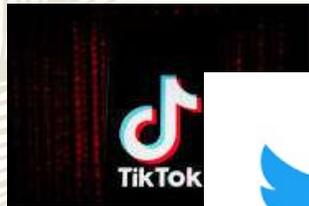
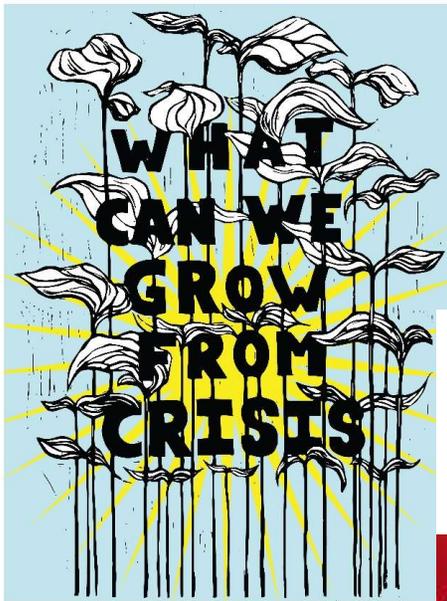
- Increased belief in personal strength
- Changes in perspective about relationships with others
- More informed opinions in the characteristics of others
- Modified priorities, goals, values
- Spiritual Growth

¹Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004

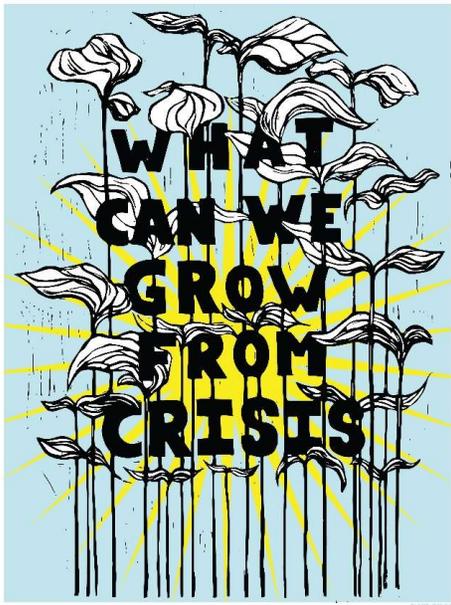
²Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004

Looking Forward

We are masters of denial and distraction



Looking Forward



We are masters of denial and distraction
Trauma forces us to confront the human condition

Socially shared schemas can be challenged and changed by traumas that have impacted the majority of a population.

Image used with permission from Pete Railand, <https://amplifier.org/>

Current Positive Growth

THE NEW
REPUBLIC

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIBE SIGN IN

American Cities Are Built for Cars. The Coronavirus Could Change That.

Wider sidewalks and no-car zones are the new hot commodity. They could even help businesses reopen.

By **DOUG GORDON**

May 26, 2020

As the Covid-19 crisis wears on, a surprising tool has emerged in the effort to slow transmission: city streets. The car has long been king in America's cities, with spacious roadways edged by narrow sidewalks. But with many sidewalks barely large enough for the six feet required for social distancing purposes, urban residents now find themselves struggling to comply with regulations during even a brief grocery trip. Some have started walking in largely traffic-free streets to get a little breathing room. As the number of runners

- Car accidents have gone down (62% in Washington State)
- Child respiratory illness has gone down
- Hand washing has become popular
- Air pollution around major cities has decreased 20-30%
 - Two months of improved air quality in china may save 4k children and 50k elderly¹
- One Fortune 500 company has seen a strong boost in productivity²

¹Burke M. Covid-19 reduces economic activity, which reduces pollution, which saves lives. G-FEED.org. 24 May 2020. www.g-feed.com/2020/03/covid-19-reduces-economic-activity.html

²Dr. Sharp phone conversation with one of the executives May 26th 2020
Screenshot of article on left taken from newrepublic.com



Post Traumatic Growth

We are the change agents because our trauma is global

- What do we normalize?
- What do we leave behind in our pre traumatic past?
- What do you want next month to look like?
- What do we want next year to look like?

Thank you

