

Understanding Post-Traumatic Growth

Objective

To complete an inventory identifying aspects of your post-traumatic growth (PTG).

What to Know

As you recover from trauma, you have choices. Researchers have discovered four options you face following trauma: succumbing to adversity, surviving with diminished quality of life, becoming resilient, and thriving. The concept of thriving promotes growth beyond survival, or Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). PTG is a process of significant and often positive shifts in thinking, feeling, behaving, and relating to the world, including increases in:

- self-efficacy
- optimism
- community connectedness
- spirituality
- faith
- compassion
- family closeness
- material gain

It is the characteristics of the subjective experience of the event – rather than the event itself – that influence PTG. The following are key areas of PTG.

- 1. Greater appreciation for life.** You may treasure moments of peace or connection you previously took for granted. You might have a renewed sense of priorities and develop an improved capacity to focus attention and resources on your most important values.
- 2. Strengthened spiritual beliefs.** The social support received from others who share similar beliefs can help you recover. Spiritual beliefs can help you restructure your worldview.
- 3. Enhanced relationships.** You might become warmer, more vulnerable, and closer to others. Belonging to a group, sharing, and communicating may open new doors. You may be more empathic and willing to invest more energy into your relationships.
- 4. Increased personal strength.** Mastering adaptive coping skills can change your perception of events. The ability to accept situations that cannot be changed may open you to new experiences.
- 5. Discovering new options.** Armed with new skills, you can find the determination to go on. Learning adaptive problem-solving skills can help you face new possibilities.
- 6. Increased creativity.** You might find it easier to try new, creative ways of doing things. You can become more playful and appreciate different art forms. Creativity makes life more fun. You might write letters, keep a diary, draw, or sing.

This worksheet will help you identify aspects of your own PTG.

What to Do

For each statement, rate the degree to which this change has occurred in your life. Mark the statements on a scale of 1-7, where 1 = minimal/not important, to 7 = maximum/very important.

- _____ 1. I have discovered new interests.
- _____ 2. I am more optimistic than before.
- _____ 3. I have learned how to change what needed to be changed.
- _____ 4. My priorities have changed.
- _____ 5. I appreciate my own life.
- _____ 6. I can achieve closeness and intimacy with people.
- _____ 7. I am more spiritual or religious.
- _____ 8. I feel more compassion and empathy toward others.
- _____ 9. I see opportunities.
- _____ 10. I am stronger than I was.
- _____ 11. I have new meaning and purpose in my life.
- _____ 12. I am more creative in things I do.
- _____ 13. I know I can count on certain people when I need help.
- _____ 14. I discovered my strengths and passions.
- _____ 15. I identified new values.
- _____ 16. I am more aware of my worth.
- _____ 17. I believe there are good people in this world.
- _____ 18. I am more playful.
- _____ 19. Other people have noticed I am changing for the better.
- _____ 20. I know what is important in life and what is not.
- _____ 21. I have more faith than before.
- _____ 22. I trust my curiosity to lead me.
- _____ 23. I am more lighthearted than before.
- _____ 24. I care about people, animals, and the planet.

- ____ 25. I use my imagination much more than before.
- ____ 26. I don't see the world as black and white; I see options.
- ____ 27. I put more energy into my relationships.
- ____ 28. I want more meaning and less "stuff" in my life.
- ____ 29. I see much more potential in my life.
- ____ 30. I have become a realistic dreamer.

The questions above refer to the six key categories of PTG. Add your score for each key area.

| PTG | Question # | Total Points by PTG Topic |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Appreciation of Life | 2, 4, 15, 20, 23 | |
| Spirituality | 7, 11, 21, 24, 28 | |
| Other People | 6, 8, 13, 17, 27 | |
| Myself | 5, 10, 14, 16, 19 | |
| Possibilities | 1, 3, 9, 26, 29 | |
| Creativity | 12, 18, 22, 25, 30 | |

Copy the statements you marked with less than 4 in the left column of the table below. In the right column, write what you can do to improve your score.

| Low-score statements | What actions can you take to improve your score? |
|----------------------|--|
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Review the statements you marked with 5 or above. In the table below, copy these statements in the left column. In the right column, write a short description of how each changed your life.

| High-score statements | How did this change your life? |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
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Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not at all helpful, to 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
