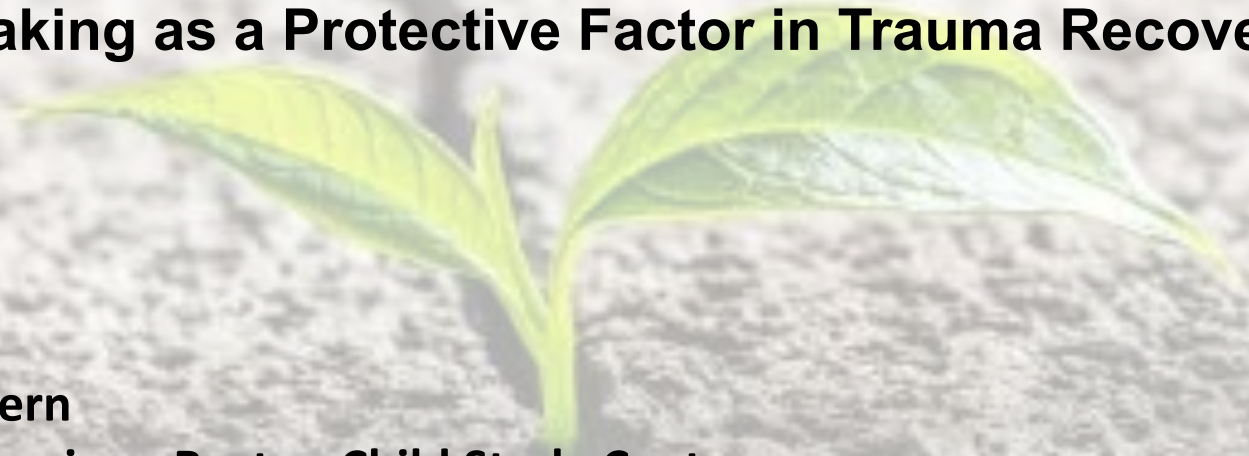


The Power of Purpose

Meaning Making as a Protective Factor in Trauma Recovery



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Outline

- Understanding Trauma
- Traumatic Invalidation
- Post Traumatic Growth (PTG)
- Examples of PTG
- Interventions

Trauma

- Fear
- Trauma changes stress pathways (Perry,2018)
- Effects development, cognition, social skills, personality, self-esteem, etc





Stress → Traumatic Stress →
Post Traumatic Stress → PTSD

- Continuous traumatic situation (CTS)

Traumatic Invalidation

- Denial of private experiences by an important person, group, or authority
- Leads to changes in the individual's beliefs (self/emotions/ others, the world) -Can lead to existential crisis
- Ignoring, emotional neglect, criticizing, blaming, misinterpreting, denying reality, controlling, blaming, unequal treatment

Impact of Traumatic Invalidation

- PTSD symptoms
- Self-invalidation
- Unrealistic standards
- Not trusting yourself
- Pervasive insecurity

Harned (2021)



PTG vs. Resilience

- **Resilience** is the ability to bounce back and adapt despite stressful events - emotional regulation
- **Post-traumatic growth** - giving meaning to the event





- Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is the experience of positive growth that as a result of experiencing a negative life trauma
- Finding strengths in struggles

(Yeung et al., 2016, Kilmer et al., 2014)

Core Aspects of PTG

Increased Personal Strength

- feeling stronger and more capable of handling future challenges.

Enhanced Relationships

- Deeper appreciation for close relationships and empathy for others

Greater Appreciation for Life

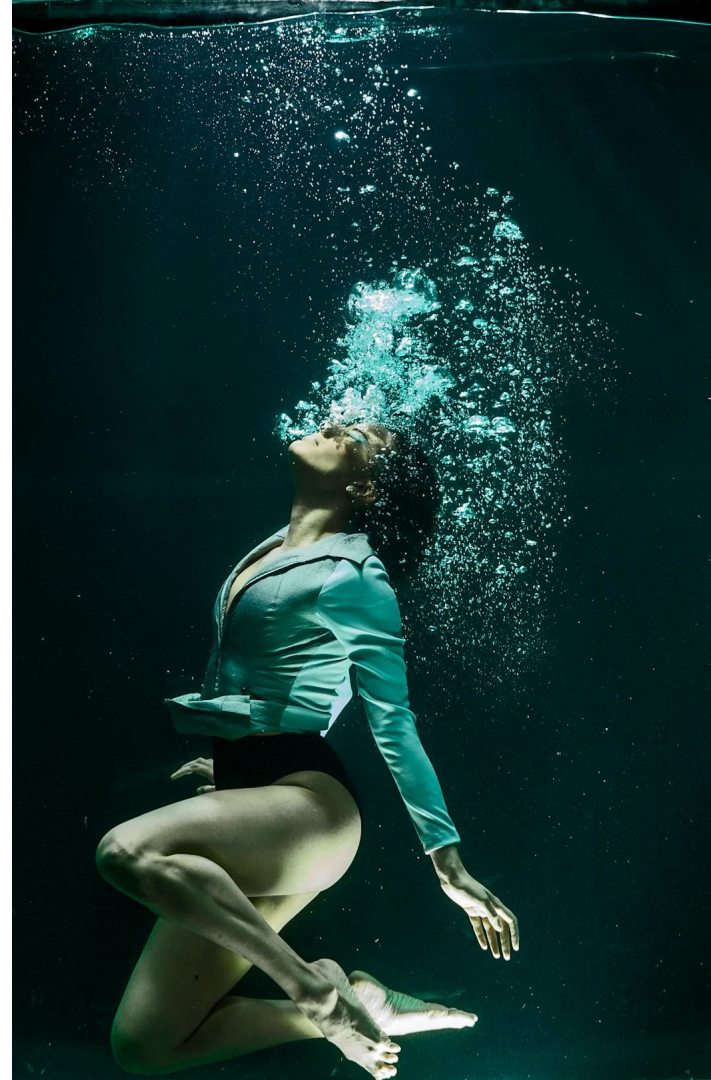
- A renewed sense of gratitude and awareness of small joys.

New Possibilities

- Discovering new interests, goals, or career paths that stem from the trauma.

Spiritual or Existential Growth

- Gaining a stronger sense of purpose/ finding meaning in the trauma.





How PTG Happens

Cognitive processing of trauma +
meaning-making

- **Reframing beliefs** about self, the world, and the future.
- **Emotional regulation**, allowing space for grief and growth.
- **Support systems**, such as therapy, social connections, or community.

*"Everything can be taken from a man but one
thing: the last of the human freedoms—to
choose one's attitude in any given set of
circumstances, to choose one's way"*

Frankl, 1984



PTG is not about minimizing the trauma or "forcing" people to find meaning. It's about **acknowledging the pain while creating space for transformation.**

Growth doesn't happen overnight and often coexists with ongoing challenges.





Examples of Post-Traumatic Growth

- Personal Strength: Overcoming illness to handle life's challenges
- Improved Relationships: families bonding after shared trauma
- New Possibilities: pursuing a dream after realizing that life is fragile
- Greater Appreciation for Life: savoring simple joy after adversity
- Spiritual or Existential Growth: fostering dialogue and understanding

How to Foster Post-Traumatic Growth

Individuals

- Encourage Meaning-Making: reflect on experiences
- Promote Self-Compassion: acknowledge pain, show kindness
- Support Emotional Expression: therapy, art, music
- Identify Strengths and Goals: set achievable and meaningful goals
- Provide Role Models and Hope: share stories of growth and hope



Communities

- Create peer support groups for people with shared experiences
- Education to create resilience:: seminars about trauma, coping strategies, and PTG
- Train professionals on Trauma-Informed Care
- Incorporate Collective gathering to honor shared pain and growth

Schools

- Trauma-Informed Education
- Meaning-making activities:
- Peer support programs:
- School wide resilience campaigns
- Mindfulness and emotional regulation skills



"There is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to be it"

Amanda Gorman

