

Post-traumatic Growth: Turning the Table on Trauma

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What is Post-traumatic Growth (PTG) ?

- ▶ Positive change as result of struggle with major life crisis or trauma event
- ▶ Very difficult time - but later – stronger than before
- ▶ Change way of understanding world & place in it



Reference number 1, 10

PTG: Not a New Concept

- ▶ Present in ancient spiritual & religious traditions, literature & philosophy

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 & endured

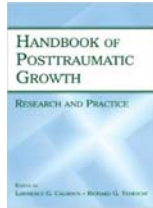
Homer, The Odyssey



Reference number 2

Post-traumatic Growth Today

- ▶ Term coined 1995 by Dr. Richard Tedeschi
 - Psychology professor at University of N. Carolina
 - Co-author with Lawrence Calhoun
 - “Handbook of Post-traumatic Growth”



PTG Today (cont.)

- ▶ The struggle with new reality after trauma - determines extent of PTG
- ▶ Occurs when attempting to adapt to highly negative sets of circumstances
 - High levels of psychological distress
 - Unpleasant psychological reactions



Reference number 1

How Does PTG occur?

- ▶ First – trauma
- ▶ Second – trauma reactions
- ▶ Third – struggles with trauma
- ▶ Fourth – treatment &/or recovery
- ▶ Fifth - resilience



Struggles with Trauma

- ▶ Forgiveness of self or others
- ▶ Shame & guilt
- ▶ Moral injury
- ▶ Loss of spirituality
- ▶ Sense of meaning in life



Reference numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 10

Treatment &/or Recovery

- ▶ “Stuck” in the recovery process
- ▶ Barrier in natural course of recovery
- ▶ Inappropriate or ineffective coping skills
- ▶ **Good news** - there is treatment & possibility for growth



Reference number 3

PTG vs PTSD

- ▶ Not all people with trauma develop PTSD
- ▶ Growth experiences far outnumber reports of psychiatric disorders
 - Personal distress & growth often co-exist
 - Both individuals & families as systems

Reference number 8

Forms of PTG

- ▶ Five general areas:
 - Opportunities – emerge with new possibilities
 - Relationships – increased connection with others who suffer
 - Self – increased sense of strength
 - Life – greater appreciation
 - Spiritual or religious – deepening in spiritual life or change in belief system

Reference number 2

Evidence for PTG

- ▶ Former prisoners of war – confirm 2 things:
 - Experienced positive growth
 - If experienced the worst (repeated torture, starvation, solitary confinement & physical injury) reported most personal growth in decades after release
- ▶ None expressed desire to go through experience again, but some said they are “stronger & better people because of it”

Reference number 1, 10

Resiliency – What is It?

- ▶ Bouncing back with more power & wisdom
- ▶ Ability to recover readily
- ▶ Adapting well in face of:
 - Adversity & tragedy
 - Trauma & threats
 - Significant sources of stress



Resiliency – Enhancing PTG

- ▶ Majority of people are resilient
- ▶ Go through tough time after:
 - Unemployment
 - Rejection
 - Violence
 - Death or loss
 - Combat, etc.
- ▶ Back where they were in month or two but with changes



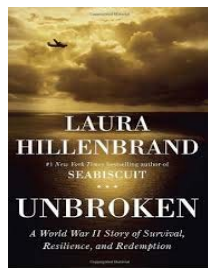
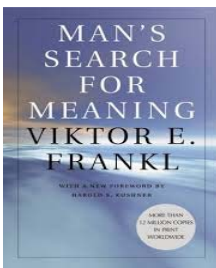
Reference numbers 4, 10

Building Resilience & Recovery

- ▶ Work out spiritual issues
 - ▶ Forgiveness of self & others
 - ▶ Support – logistics & resources
 - ▶ Nurture & build relationships
- *Primary factor - caring & supportive relationships within & outside family*

Reference numbers 4, 10, 11

Stories of Resilience and PTG



PTG – Turning the Table on Trauma

- ▶ Giving it a “positive twist”
 - Not implying trauma events are “good”
 - Growth after trauma does not mean “no suffering”
 - Typical to have distress when facing traumatic events
- ▶ Face very difficult losses or great suffering – can lead to growth

Reference number 2

Importance of PTG Discussion

- ▶ Need to know:
 - *“an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior”*
 - Common trauma reactions need to be recognized, assessed & treated
 - Usual response is resilience & sometimes growth – **Post-Traumatic Growth**

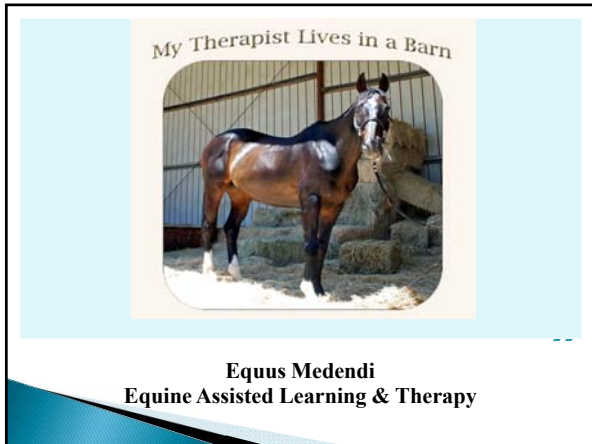
Reference numbers 4, 9, 10

Vehicles of PTG

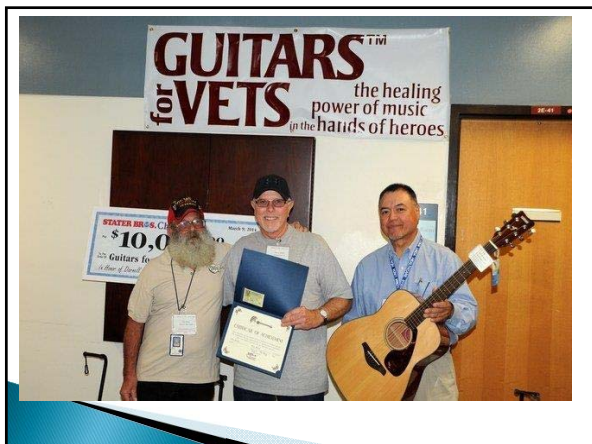


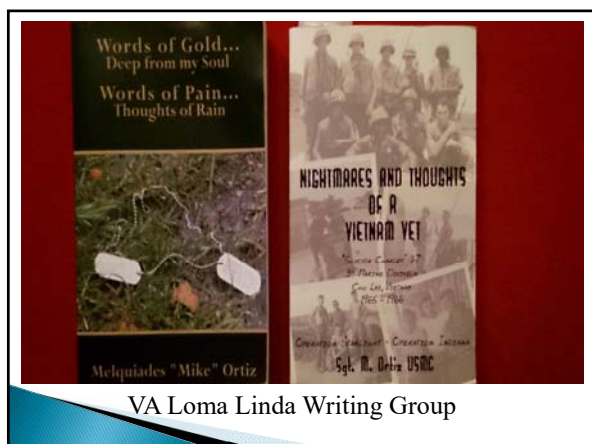
- ▶ Horses
- ▶ Service Dogs
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Writing



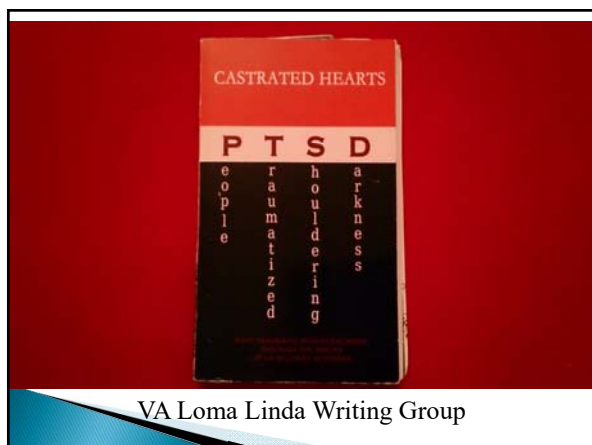








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Inmate Dog Training Programs & Service Dogs for PTSD >>

Final Group Exercise & Discussion

▶ Questions:

- Identify PTSD & secondary trauma symptoms.
- What are the needs of this veteran & family?
- How could you adapt your court structure or service to accommodate these needs?
- How can you expand your treatment needs?
- How can you collaborate with others & who might they be?
- What would your team know to effectively work with this veteran & family?

**“That which does not kill me,
makes me stronger”.**



Nietzsche

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