

*How to experience
post traumatic
growth*



**WALT INSTITUTE
WOMEN AUTHENTIC
LEADERSHIP TRAINING**



What is post traumatic growth?

The definition of post traumatic growth (PTG) is "a positive change, experienced as a result of the struggle with a major life, career crisis, or traumatic event". *Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996*

This is when you are able to look back on the event and identify meaning or benefits of coming through the situation. You see it with eyes of thankfulness and hope, and not with an attitude of being stuck in the trauma of the event.

You are able to find higher levels of conscious awareness about your life. PTG only occurs AFTER you have been through the traumatic moment(s). It is not caused by the actual event, rather the happenings that occur after.

Growth can incorporate an optimistic way of thinking, stronger connections or relationships with self and other people, and a deeper appreciation of your purpose in life.

When people exhibit PTG, they can easily identify their personal strengths and are able to bring them to the 'now', and use them each day with clarity and intention.



How does PTG enhance your life?

When you become aware of the growth that has happened, you have access to a broader set of skills to deal with stress, uncomfortable situations, unknown situations, adversity and trauma in the future.

You are able to respond with more agility and flexibility with new or stressful situations. PTG increases your threshold for dealing with the sh*#. It redefines your priorities in life as you understand what is important for you in a different way. It has a way of re-adjusting your priorities in life.

For example if you received a disease diagnosis, you may be more appreciative of life every single day. Your actions are not dependent on inane things like weather, situations, or people in your day - but the deeper meaning of life and why you are on this planet. You often develop a more profound appreciation of people and identify who you want to spend more (or less) time with. You work out how to contribute to humanity and present your real authentic self.

*When you
discover post
traumatic growth
in your life -
you will NEVER
be the same!*

How do you get PTG?

You cannot *force* post traumatic growth to occur but you CAN set yourself up to increase the likelihood of it occurring.

The characteristics that enhance your likelihood of experiencing PTG are:

Openness: being open to new ideas, new ways of learning, and learning from other people.

To enhance openness: practise being non-judgemental. Accepting others for their opinions, beliefs, and actions - doesn't mean you have to agree with them, but you need to be open to their ideas or the situation.

Extroversion (connectedness): ability to build and maintain a network of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

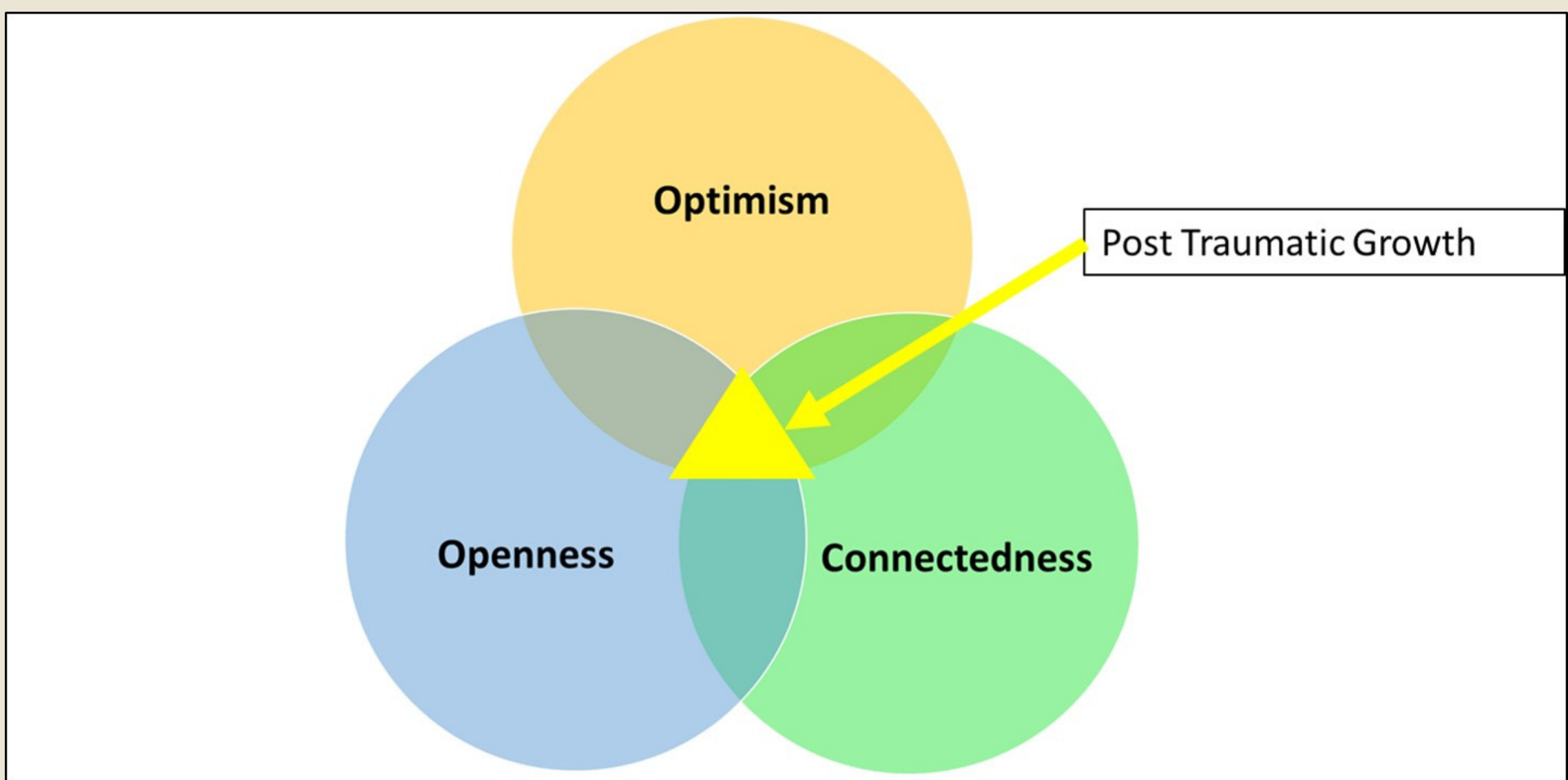
To promote connectedness: practise being with other people in a meaningful way, practise being in the moment - listening, fully attentive. Practise asking for help, being open to share honest and personal things when appropriate, share your beliefs, understandings, dreams and aspirations when safe to do so.

*Growth
always begins
with YOU!*

Optimism: ability to view things positively with realism. Not 'pretending' things are okay when they aren't, not the Pollyanna approach - but real, honest facing the moment and situation. You will then be able to look forward and see the optimistic side of it.

*To switch the negative mindset (we are mostly negatively wired as human beings) into optimism. Looking for **opportunities** rather than difficulties or challenges. Begin with writing down 'three good things' in a day (what has occurred that you are grateful for - be creative, don't repeat something twice in a 21-day time period). Consciously attend to positive experiences and activities - LOOK for the positive NOT the negative. Think it, speak it!*

When all **three** characteristics are present AND you have been able to positively deal with the initial impact of the event, you are extremely likely to ***experience growth***.



PTG does NOT just happen - it is NOT a given!
It takes time, energy, and struggle to work through the traumatic event or highly stressful situation.

NB: Just because you have experienced PTG once it does not mean that you have PTG forever. You have to work at it like every other skill that sets you up for SUCCESS and then you are more likely to be able to move THROUGH it!

Growth after the trauma

There are **FIVE** areas in which a positive response can be seen for those who have achieved growth following trauma or highly stressful events.

Check these out!

1) **Appreciation of life** - the individual expresses gratitude in their daily life, they embrace joy and can identify positive moments. Often a greater value is placed on life and their priorities change. They engage more with the world around them and are able to BE in the moment and engage all their senses.

2) **Relationships with others** - the individual acknowledges more social interactions and deeper connections with supportive people. They have stronger more intimate interpersonal relationships and are able to express themselves openly and honestly with their support crew.

3) **New possibilities in life** - the individual develops the ability to consider and then follow through with new activities, learning new things and doing things differently is happening. The individual acknowledges that new opportunities are available to them that were not there before the event. They identify opportunities rather than difficulties.



4) **Personal strength** - the individual is aware of their capabilities and taps into their innate strengths as a way of getting through daily life with ease. They recognise that they are stronger than they once thought or believed. The individual learns how to use their strengths in a different way, and more often.

5) **Spiritual change** - the individual explores their spirituality in a new way. This change is a very common one and often occurs on a greater level than the other four areas. A belief in faith develops - this may not be of a religious nature. It can be a belief, an awareness or an acknowledgement of a source bigger and beyond the individual themselves.

Change can
be scary -
but walk
forward with
courage!

It is **never** easy to experience trauma or stressful situations. However, there **IS** a way forward! You **CAN** build and develop skills that can help you to bounce **FORWARD** with resilience. When you experience post traumatic growth, you are able to look back over time and recognise that you are in a different place than before.

Take heart - keep going - and there is always someone to help you out!

We hope this information has been a catalyst for the next step in your journey!

If you would like more assistance to work through these skills and develop a long lasting method for recognising and developing your growth, please contact us to work with you.

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