

Welcome to this
HAPPY STUFF AND FLUFF
deep dive into

POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH:

Dealing with trauma, adversity or
'regular' tough times and coming
through a stronger person



*Thank you so much for sharing
your time with me!*



HELLO!

If we haven't met - my name is CHRISTINE L CONROY. I help women change their lives for better living. I do this as a positive psychology practitioner; a public speaker, author and host of the You tube channel, HAPPY STUFF AND FLUFF. I am delighted that you decided to join me here.

We are all impacted by trauma at some point in our lives - be it global or personal. Some people may need professional assistance to navigate through it. If you find yourself in this position, I highly recommend, particularly, seeking out a specialist in trauma therapy.

Whilst this PDF doesn't focus on healing trauma necessarily, the contents will help. I used the ideas presented here to help me and family navigate our own way through trauma. Also to help me find greater strength and happiness post trauma.

My hope is that if you are dealing with adversity of any kind, you will find some solace and hope here - and that it will help all readers develop the resilience needed to handle unexpected challenges with greater ease.

*Warmly,
Christine*

Let's jump in

WHAT IS POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH:

Post Traumatic Growth

The positive psychological change that some individuals experience after a life crisis or traumatic event. People who not only return to their 'norm' of happiness but actually surpass it

Of all the definitions I have read, this one describes my own thoughts about Post Traumatic growth. It is important to note that those who experience PTG do not experience the devastating emotion of trauma any less. Nor do they, necessarily, heal any quicker. The psychological growth and/or greater happiness develops after the event.

However, once you understand what's happening and you are conscious of your thinking, you can actually ask yourself in the moment, 'What can I learn from this? Your answer to that could possibly introduce your next step and move you forward more quickly. But, that is jumping ahead just a little. Let's take a brief look at trauma.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA:

A person's experience of emotional distress resulting from an event that overwhelms the ability to be able to emotionally deal with it.

(Adapted from Psychology today)



TYPES OF TRAUMA include:

Emotional or physical abuse
Physical attack
Witnessing physical attack
Terminal diagnosis
Accident
Serious injury
Childhood trauma
Sexual trauma
Divorce
Redundancy
Robbery
Death of a loved one
Caring for a sick loved one

Of course there are many more events that could be considered traumatic. Basically, anything that completely turns your world upside down, causing you distress and for a while rendering you with the overwhelming feeling that you cannot cope.

There are some traumatic events that are so devastating you might need a specialist trauma therapist to help you - seek them out immediately.

The effects of trauma can be devastating and long lasting. Especially, if the trauma goes unresolved. By unresolved, I mean if the difficult life experience has not been adequately dealt with. Some people try to pretend it didn't happen or constantly try to avoid thinking about it. Others are always arranging to be manically busy and filling their lives with all kinds of everything so that the memory is buried deep. I had one client who would go to great lengths never to be alone. This can go on for years. Unfortunately, avoidance does not work long term.



The memory of a traumatic experience – just like pushing a beach ball down into the sea – will keep popping back up where and when you least expect it



We all deal with trauma differently. According to Positive psychologist, Sonja Lyubomirsky there are three pathways:

SURVIVING – those who are crushed by trauma and are never the same again. They may suffer from Post Traumatic Stress disorder or, as above, are in denial and suffer dreadfully because of it.

RECOVERING – those people who eventually go back to the way they were before the trauma. Their happiness levels return to ‘normal’ for them.

THRIVING – Those people who not only recover their previous happiness but actually surpass it.

This would be the, ‘Bouncing back better’ scenario. This is where I would like to offer hope to those of you going through difficult times at this very moment. Not only can the future be better, it can be brighter. This is POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH.

The idea of PTG was developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in the 1990's. Researchers today estimate that as many as up to two thirds of those experiencing trauma will go on to



experience aspects of PTG.
These people report such things as:

A DEEPER APPRECIATION OF LIFE
STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS
REALIZATION OF PERSONAL STRENGTHS
DEEP SPIRITUAL AWARENESS

This is not to say they suffered any less through the trauma or that they recovered more quickly. These Post Traumatic Experiences, as the name suggests, happened after the trauma.

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**I believe know that we can foster POST
TRAUMATIC GROWTH**

I am not a trauma specialist. I am a Positive psychology practitioner and coach. Over the years I have witnessed countless numbers of people who, after having suffered trauma of some kind, said such things as:

'I felt so certain that I would be able to deal more confidently with life'
'I finally realized what was important in life'
'I handed my notice in the moment I got back to work. I knew I wanted to make the most of life'
I felt closer to God'.

From my own experience I know that greater strength and happiness is possible after experiencing some kind of trauma. For me, that trauma was caring for and witnessing the death of my mother, my sister and more recently my daughter at the age of 31.

I believe there are three things that will determine whether or not a person comes through tragedy/trauma/adversity a stronger person.



Fortunately, all three can be nurtured and developed long before trauma hits. They are:

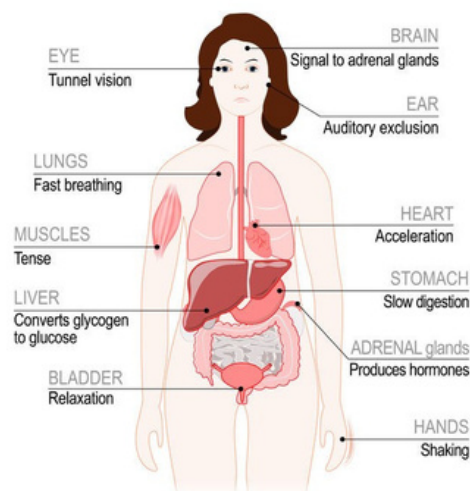
YOUR HEALTH

YOUR THOUGHTS

YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

There is no sugar coating the fact that when trauma happens it can be absolutely devastating. When something of this magnitude happens your brain sees it as a threat and goes into Stress response. Before I go into detail about my three ways, let's have a quick look at what happens to your body when it goes into 'fight or flight' response.

Fight-or-flight response



The threat causes your brain to send a signal to the adrenal glands and your body is flooded with hormones such as Adrenaline and Cortisol to help you fight or run away. Adrenaline causes your blood pressure to rise and your heart to beat faster giving you more energy. **Cortisol helps to slow down the functions in your body that are not needed in a fight or flight situation such as your digestive and immune systems.** Once the threat is over your body goes back to normal or rest and digest mode and you are fine until the next time.

But what happens if the perceived threat is long term, such as caring for a terminally ill family member? Your body stays on high alert and you are over exposed to the stress hormones. **you feel constantly under attack.**

This puts you at higher risk of illness and disease such as:



Headaches
Anxiety and depression
Muscle aches and pains
Digestive problems
Weight gain
Sleep issues
Heart disease
Heart attack
Strokes

Being aware of this means that we can put things into place to avoid these possible consequences. Now, I will explain my three strategies to help you .

1. PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Eat healthy but also **easily digested foods**. Foods such as, bananas, soups, white rice, fish. You can google to get loads more suggestions

Boost your immune system especially be sure your **vitamin d** levels stay at optimum levels *always*.

Exercise – especially aerobics **which will mimic, ‘flight’ or running away**, helping to flush the stress hormones through your body. Also yoga to help get you back to rest and digest.

Breathwork – especially square breathing. **Breathe in for four, hold for four, out for four, hold for four**. The military use this to help them relax quickly. It will help you.

Sleep routine – try to stick to a routine here. Even if you struggle to sleep. It is important to keep a normal routine. Try not to turn to alcohol or drugs to help you sleep. **We know that alcohol enhances the mood you are in. So, if you are sad you will be more sad. Anxious you will be more anxious.** You need a clear head!



2 YOUR THOUGHTS

This is not about *positive* thinking. This is about *accurate* thinking

As far as possible you must refrain from **CATASTROPHIZING**. Of course, this is easier said than done. I will leave links in the resources section to a video that will help with this. **Jumping to conclusions, worse case scenario thinking**, 'STINKING THINKING' as I call it only serves to keep your brain in fight or flight mode. ***Your brain does not know the difference between what is actually happening and what you are worried about happening.*** Those fight or flight hormones will continue to flood around your system putting you at risk of all the things previously mentioned.

Getting yourself back into, 'Rest and digest' mode will help you to judge accurately and act accordingly, to help you through effectively. Keeping an open mind and a growth mindset will help. No matter your circumstances there is always hope that things will get better and your situation is not permanent.

In order to change your way of thinking you must first **be aware of your thoughts**. Meditation, mindfulness, journaling are all ways to tap in to the way you think. Start tuning into your thoughts right now.

3 YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Two friends are meeting to go for a hike up a hill. One friend arrives sooner and goes to look at the hill they are about to climb. She estimates it is going to be a difficult climb and will take them at least three hours to reach the top.

The second friend arrives and both of them look at the hill – the second friend says, 'It looks to be an easy climb that will probably take us under two hours to do.' The first friend takes another look at the hill and says, 'Actually, I think you are right.'

In fact, this was a study done that showed every *single* person estimated the hill to be higher and more difficult than groups of people asked the same question.



Of course the moral to the story is – ***things are easier when you are not alone.*** I know from my own experience how easy it is to feel that no-one else could *possibly* understand what you are going through, so why talk to anyone about it.

We know that talking to a genuinely, caring and trustworthy person helps tremendously. Just talking it out puts your thoughts in order and gives you more clarity. Talk to a family member, a friend, your GP or a professional therapist if you feel you need it.

Whatever you are going through or have been through – someone has been through it before you and survived. if researchers are correct almost two thirds have gone on to experience Post Traumatic Growth. YOU ARE NOT ALONE and THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE



Hello again,

I do hope you found something here or in the companion videos to help you. I know we are only scratching the surface on such a huge subject. I have left more videos and some hugely helpful books for further reading in the resources section. Remember to seek out help if you are struggling to deal with this on your own.

Other than that, I welcome you to Happy Stuff and Fluff where we talk about everything to do with your happiness and wellbeing.

With warmth and best wishes


Christine
L. CONROY



RESOURCES

VIDEOS

This Post Traumatic Growth PDF is a companion to the following videos.

[Post Traumatic Growth: finding happy after hurt](#)

[Can you transform trauma into personal growth?](#)

Other useful videos

[The Catastrophizing Trap and how to stop it](#)

[Stop catastrophic Thinking](#)

[Resilience: How to cope when things go wrong](#)

BOOKS

[The Resilience Factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life hurdles.](#)

[The Post Traumatic Growth Guidebook](#)

[Bouncing back: Rewiring your brain for maximum resilience and wellbeing](#)

