

**POST TRAUMATIC
GROWTH
GOOD NEWS FOR
TRAUMA**

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a thick yellow wavy line with a white outline, set against a dark brown background.

DSM V

DSM V

- Exposure to death, serious injury or sexual violence.
- Presence of one or more of the following symptoms:
 - Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories
 - Recurrent distressing dreams
 - Dissociative reactions
 - Intense or prolonged psychological distress
 - Marked physiological reactions to cues
 - Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with traumatic events (memories, thoughts, feelings associated with event or avoidance of external reminders)
 - Negative alterations in cognitions and mood evidenced by two of following: inability to remember important aspect of event, persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs about self, persistent distorted cognitions about the cause consequences of the event, persistent negative emotional state, diminished interest in significant activities, feelings of detachment, inability to experience positive emotions.

DSM V CONTINUED

- Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with event as evidenced by two of the following: irritable behavior, reckless or self-destructive behavior, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, problems concentrating, sleep disturbance.
- Duration of disturbance is more than 1 month.
- Disturbance causes clinically significant stress
- Disturbance is not attributable to effects of a substance
- Specify:
- With dissociative symptoms of: 1) Depersonalization 2) Derealization
- Specify if they have a delayed expression

HISTORY

- Civil War – Soldiers returned with “Soldier’s Heart”.
- WWI – Soldiers had “Shell Shock”.
- WWII – Soldiers had “Battle Fatigue”.
- After Vietnam, soldiers returned with severe mental health problems. (Many blocked out memories and some still won’t talk about their service.)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder first recognized and included in the DSM in 1980.

THE STRESS PROCESS

- When exposed to stressful event:
- One's body and brain goes through a set of actions and reactions outside of their control.
- Visual information is sent to the thalamus.
- From there, routed to 2 different directions; the amygdala which is processed as 'fight or flight', and the visual cortex that forms a detailed picture.
- When amygdala receives the information it triggers the hypothalamus, which releases adrenaline, cortisol, and norepinephrine.
- Increase in breathing and heart rate.
- Blood flow increased to muscles, fat is made ready for quick fuel, and pupils dilate to allow more light in.
- From the visual cortex, the more detailed information is sent to the hippocampus, then sent to the amygdala.
- continued

THE STRESS PROCESS CONTINUED

- The amygdala determines what is and is not a threat. Also how much of an intensity of a response to the threat.
- The release of hormones helps to preserve life.
- Time appears to slow down.
- Stress causes the Amygdala to grow.



POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

GOOD NEWS FOR TRAUMA

POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

- Trauma can spark positive changes
- This is found in cultures around the world
- Old heroic myths, sacred religious figures, and superheroes.
- Heroic myth – e.g. George Washington leading a revolution and becoming a president.
- Sacred religious figures – Moses leading his people, parting the Red Sea, and leading to the land of milk and honey.
- Superheroes – Batman watches his parents killed and dedicates his life to fighting crime.
- Traumatic events can transform people for the better and make their lives more meaningful.

- Although the evidence has been seen for thousands of years, it wasn't until the 1980s that a handful of researchers began examining these changes.
- Half or more trauma survivors reported positive changes as a result of their experience.
- Original research of Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, Psychology professors at the University of North Carolina. Their research started with interviewing widows, then they studied people who had been disabled through an accident or illness.
- William Sledge a psychiatrist at Yale School of medicine studied aviators who were captured in Vietnam.
- Discovered many were stronger and more resilient after their adversity.
- Compared the former POW's with a control group of age, rank, and who had spent time in southeast Asia that had not been captured.
- Found 61% of the POW's indicated beneficial changes as a result of their captivity vs. 30 % of the control group.

PTG CONTINUED

- Tedeschi and Calhoun began doing more research.
- Discovered positive change in 5 areas of one's life: a) Increased inner strength, b) Openness to new possibilities, c) Closer / Deeper relationships with family and friends, d) Enhanced Appreciation for life, and e) Stronger sense of Spirituality.
- Tedeschi – “Growth is a rethinking, a reassessment of yourself and the world.”
- Victor Frankl – “Man's Search for Meaning.” Focused on finding meaning in life, especially one suffering.
- Maslow and the Hierarchy of needs.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

5. Self Actualization

4. Esteem

3. Love and Belonging

2. Safety

1. Physiological (Food / water)

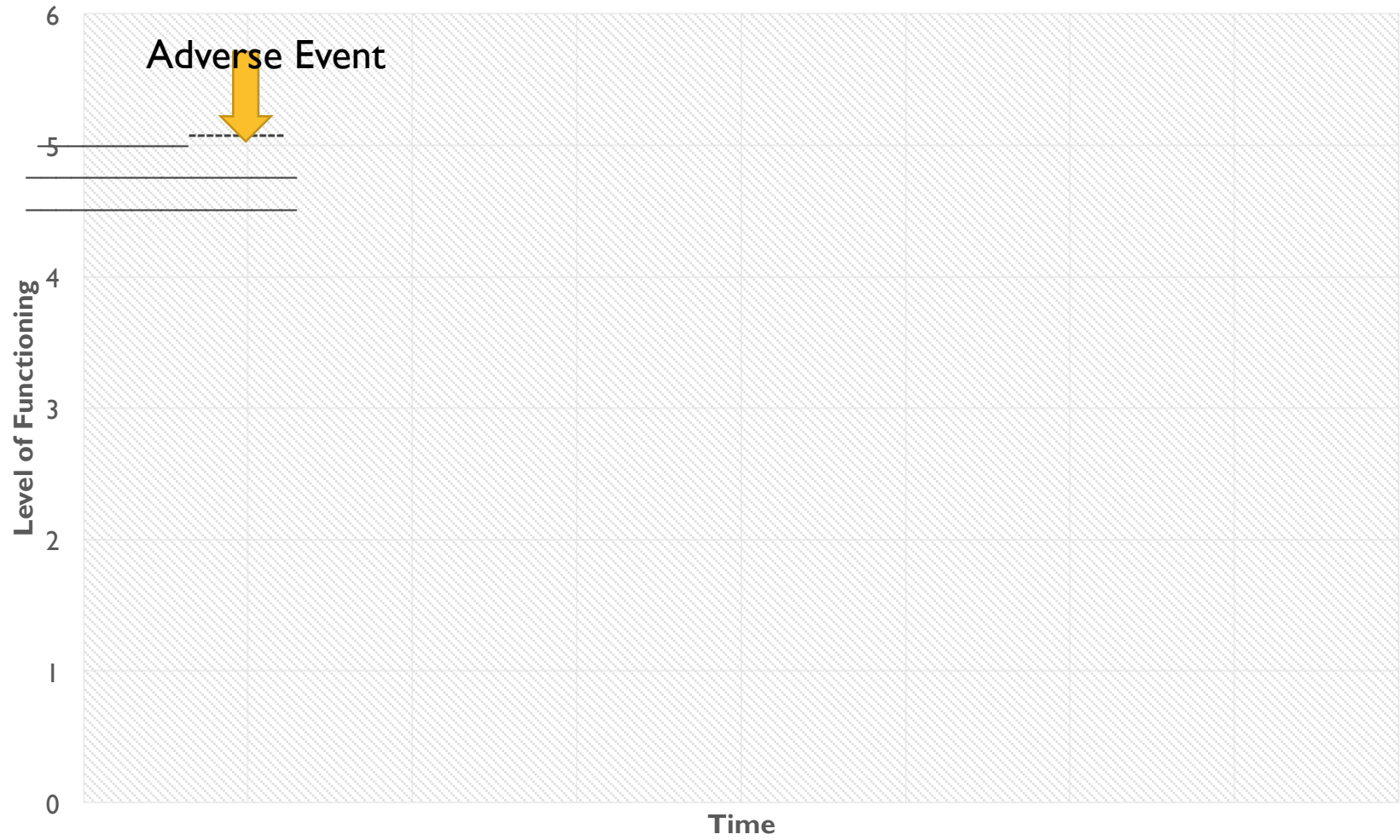
MCANDREW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

5. Celebrity status at any cost
4. At least one viral video
3. Plentiful (virtual) friends and followers, some of whom one has met in real life
2. Reliable power source for charging devices
1. Cell phone with unlimited data plan

TRANSFORMATION

- People experiencing trauma report being transformed by:
- Positive views on life
- Changed priorities
- A new sense of who they are
- New sense of what they are capable of
- Increased closeness and more loving toward other people.
- Relationships taken to a deeper level
- These indicate PTG.

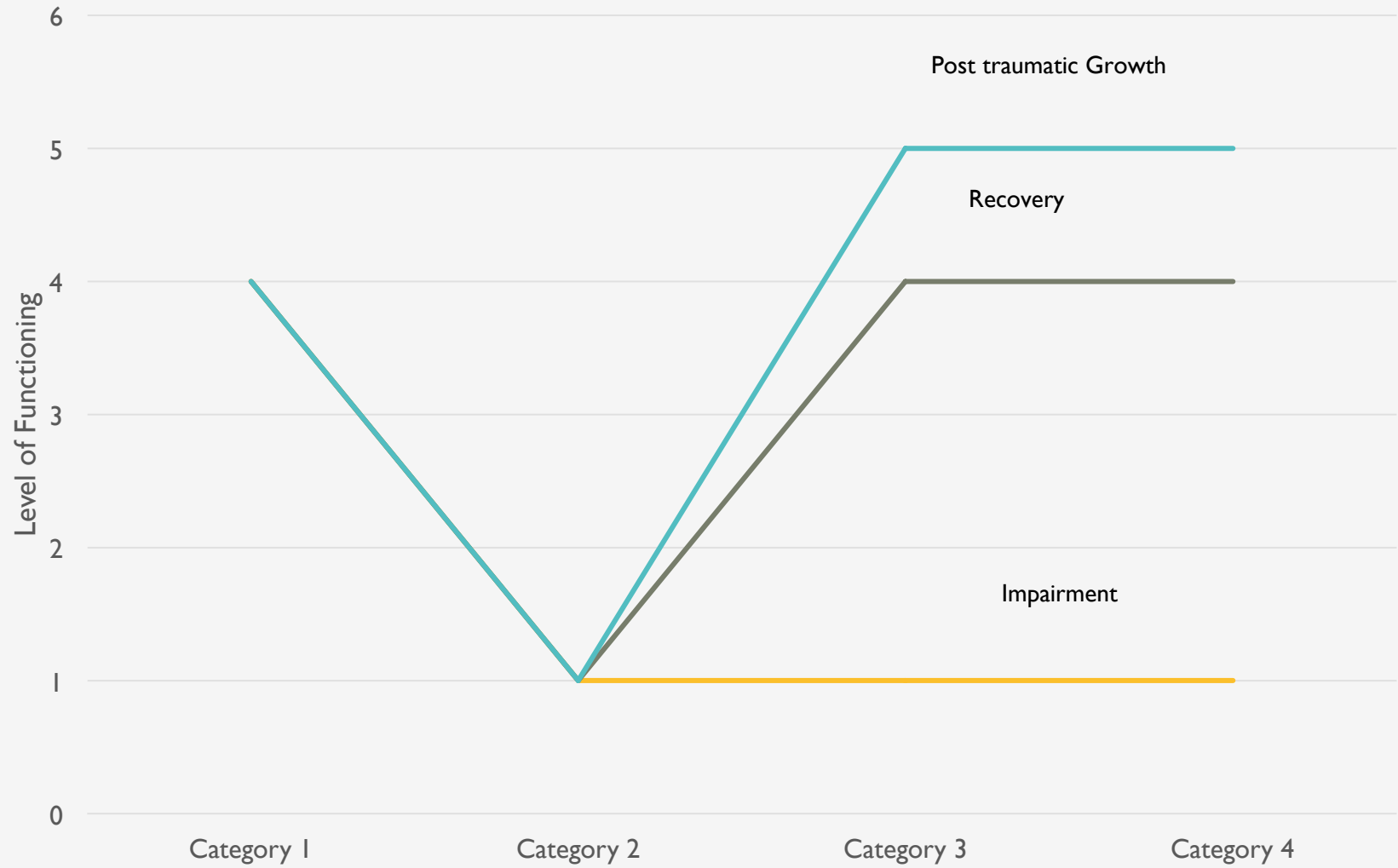
Trauma Resistant



TRAUMA RESISTANT

- This is what we think of with people who are naturally resistant.
- Some people seem to weather stressful events and are emotionally unscathed when they emerge.

Post Traumatic Growth



Post Traumatic Growth refers to people who actually grow after a diversity.

They may remain emotionally affected, but:

- their sense of self
- views on life
- Priorities
- goals for the future and
- behaviors have been reconfigured in positive ways.

The three most common aspects reported:

- Personal Changes (find inner strength, greater wisdom, and more compassionate)
- Philosophical changes (A newfound sense of what's important in life, don't sweat the small stuff)
- Relationship changes. (Valuing relationships that they previously took for granted, all important relationships improve)

Researchers began looking at growth following adversity in the early 1990's. In one of the earliest studies, researchers looked at people who had lost a spouse or child in a motor vehicle accident.

They found:

- 35% had increased self confidence
- 26% focused on enjoying the present
- 23% had a greater appreciation of life.
- 19% had an increased emphasis on family
- 15% had an increased religiosity
- 7% had an increased openness and concern for others.

Some respondents offered more than one positive change in their lives.

After September 11th, 2001, new interest in Post Traumatic Growth came about to the entire nation being traumatized. They began studying trauma, recovery and reconfiguration.

One particular study begun in November 2001 examined the perceived benefits of the terrorist attacks. They surveyed 1382 adults over a three year period.

The respondents reported:

- Prosocial benefits (Most people are kinder and more caring to each other.) 15.8 %
- Philosophical changes (Life is precious, live each day as your last) 7.3%
- Increased religiosity (More people praying and attending church) 9.3%
- Political changes (Increased patriotism, awareness of government) 8.9 %
- Increased national security (Heightened security at airports and across the country) 7.3%

This study found 58 % of respondents reported benefits.

POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

- PTG triggered by an existential wake up call.
- Life is inherently uncertain, unpredictable, and uncontrollable – and we are all vulnerable and fragile.
- Sometimes referred to as a “Quantum Change”.
- Create a new narrative.

TOOLS

- Post Traumatic Growth inventory (PTGI) developed by Lawrence Calhoun and Richard Tedeschi at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte in 1996.
- One can take the PTGI online at: <http://cust-cf.apa.org/ptgi/index.cfm>
- On a scale of 0-5, 0 = “I did not experience change as a result of crisis” to 5 = I experienced change to a great degree.
- Ratings on statements such as “I developed a sense of closeness with others”, or “I have a stronger religious faith”.
- The lowest score one can achieve is “0” and the highest is “105”. The higher one scores, the the more the person perceives themselves to have grown.
- Commonly range between 40 and 70.

PATHS TO POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

- Approach oriented coping skills
- Task focused coping.
- Focus on practical problems after trauma
- Example – planning on running the Boston Marathon while in the hospital after being injured in the bombing.
- Emotion focused coping
- Strategies to help confront and manage our emotional distress.
- Finding / utilizing a support system.
- Focus on appreciation / gratitude.
- Increase in religious practice / rituals /finding meaning
- Honest communication.
- It's important to discern 1) who we can confide in, 2) what is appropriate to share, and 3) and when to hold back.
- Utilize emotional intelligence i.e. 1) perceive emotions, 2) access and generate emotions 3) understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and 4) reflexively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.
- Forgiveness can be an important piece AT THE RIGHT TIME AND WHEN THE CLIENT IS READY.
- PTG is about becoming more authentic and true to ourselves.

PATHS CONTINUED

- Avoidance oriented coping skills
- Denial
- Anger
- The “What if’s” or the “If only’s” AKA bargaining stage of grief.
- Drinking / drug use including prescription meds to help with symptoms, i.e. Zanax to help with sleep.
- Isolation – If I’m not close, I can’t get hurt.
- These are ways to avoid the painful emotions associated with the trauma.
- They are helpful at first, but if prolonged can be debilitating as problems pile up.

GUIDANCE

- It's okay to offer:
 - Instruction in relaxation techniques.
 - Identifying new thinking patterns (Positive psychology)
 - Monitoring and managing Anxiety
 - Identifying client defense mechanisms
 - Honest feedback
- Feelings are natural
 - How we express feelings
 - Identify healthy coping mechanisms

FIRST STEP TO GROWTH – TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR LIFE DIRECTION

- In “Man’s search for meaning,” Viktor Frankl said: Man is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes, he has made out of himself. What a man becomes is based on decisions, not on conditions.
- It’s not what happens to us, but the meaning we assign to it that’s important.
- Humans are storytellers. It’s in our nature to make meaning of our lives through the stories we tell.
- Trauma ruptures our life story. By telling new stories, we rebuild our sense of self.

NURTURING GROWTH

- Gaining client trust. This may take time, sometimes several sessions.
- Don't judge how they reacted.
- Let them tell the story, as many times as necessary.
- VAM – Verbally Accessible Memories. Consciously accessed trauma related information. Talk therapy helpful with this.
- SAM – Situationally Accessible Memories. These are triggered by reminders, but usually not consciously accessed. Exposure therapy and coping skills for when triggers occur outside of therapy.
- Exposure therapy can be imaginal (client talks repeatedly about the situation), in vivo (Client is exposed to situation or object sometimes through virtual reality), or a combination of the two.
- Avoid risk by going at their pace, not yours.

NURTURING GROWTH CONTINUED

- Imagery re-scripting – Client watches the trauma memory as if on a small t.v. screen which they turn off.
- EMDR – Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. Controversial. Most useful in single episode trauma. Don't know why it works, but it works. Is it just symptom relief?
- If client is avoiding, desensitization helpful.
- Desensitization can be helpful and client can do it themselves in small steps outside of therapy.
- Small goals. Baby steps.
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can be helpful to begin to relieve symptoms.
- As symptoms decrease, and the client can think more clearly, they begin to search for meaning.

COPING STRATEGIES

- Positively reinterpreting the situation. I.e. Reframing
- Distraction
- Venting emotions (in healthy ways)
- Practical support (Example – A family member sets up medications in daily dose container, or having a workout partner who picks you up to work out.)
- Humor
- Denial
- Religion
- Emotional support

HEALING VALUE OF COPING STRATEGIES

- Dependent on appropriateness to task at hand. (I.e. Religious support might be good for a returning soldier or a divorcee, but not for someone raped by a cleric)
- Helps us to re-author our life stories.
- No coping strategy is a “One size fits all.”

POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

- Once they begin searching for meaning, this is the point where they begin Post Traumatic Growth. (Hint: This is different than the bargaining stage of grief which happens early on)
- The APA suggests the following for coping with adversity:
 - Making connections with others
 - Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable
 - Accepting change as part of life
 - Moving toward goals (not giving up)
 - Taking decisive actions
 - Opportunities for self-discovery
 - Nurturing a positive view of self (Self love / self forgiveness)
 - Learning from the past
 - Maintaining hope
 - Self-Care

ACTIVE COPING

- Therapists can be helpful in teaching new coping skills but,
- Therapists cannot teach people meaning.
- Meaning is unique for every person.
- Therapist in PTG serves as an experienced guide for the client.
- Client is ultimately responsible for the route taken
- Client also sets the pace
- If therapist pushes beyond client's pace, process can be derailed.
- They are responsible for their journey toward reconfiguration or growth.
- Clients who feel valued, accepted and understood, are more likely to open up.
- They then feel capable of re-authoring their life story.
- If they are going to open up they have to feel safe.
- A big sign of progress is after someone reveals something to you and they say, "I've never told that to *anyone* before.
- Sometimes takes months or years.

THERAPISTS ROLE

- Therapist facilitates growth, does not create growth. We are the gardener and the client is the plant.
- We can't tell people what meaning to make of their experience.
- Reassure and let client feel safe. No judgement, no matter what they say.
- Be aware it's common for clients to open up and then retreat. Clients direct their progress.
- We empower the client to take responsibility for their own recovery and the tools necessary for this are in their own hands.
- Listen to their accounts of trauma and struggles to move forward.
- Listen with COMPASSION.

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL
WELL BEING POST
TRAUMATIC CHANGES
QUESTIONNAIRE**

PWB-PTCQ

PWB-PTCQ

- It can be used to assess ways in which clients perceive they have changed.
- Consists of 18 statements in groups of three.
- It measures: Self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, relationships, sense of mastery, and personal growth.
- Scores over 54 indicate the emergence of posttraumatic growth. Scores over 72 indicate high levels of growth.
- You can use as a client based measurement tool and administer every 2-4 weeks. Helps clients to see their progress.

JOURNALING EMOTIONS

- In the late 1970's, Professor James Pennebaker began researching the healing value of emotional expression.
- Found that people who kept secrets had more physical health problems. (We're only as sick as our secrets).
- Found that people who wrote about their feelings for 15 minutes per day were healthier than others.
- Other benefits: more aggressive immune system, better sleep, reduced absenteeism from work, improved GPA's, and decreased respiratory problems.
- Use positive words like, *Love, happy, care, and good*, in a ratio of 3 to 1 over negative words.

THREE KEY MESSAGES FOR PTG

- 1) You are not on your own. You don't have to face this journey alone.
- Contrary to society's teaching of "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps."
- The trauma's are individualized, but recovery and growth need support.
- It's common to feel confused, disoriented and life is chaotic. Clients sometimes report, "I feel like I'm losing it," or, "I'm going crazy."
- It is okay to seek help.
- When we share with the right people, we find they also have a story.

- 2) Trauma is a natural process.
- People may feel frightened and confused after adversity.
- They may have intrusive thoughts and images.
- (Cont.)

THREE KEY MESSAGES CONTINUED

- They may become emotionally detached and avoidant.
 - They may have anxiety and depression.
 - This is normal and the *beginning* of the healing process.
-
- 3) Growth is a journey.
 - Each step might be painful, but staying in one place is continued pain.
 - Those who grow from adversity emerge wiser, more mature, and / or more fulfilled people.
 - Must be careful not to place too heavy a burden of expectation on themselves.

MORE SUGGESTIONS

- Rule – Don't do anything you don't think you can handle at this moment.
- Remember YOU are in control when you begin to feel out of control. You can stop and start at anytime.
- Practice “a safe place” imagery. Create an image that feels safe and calming. i.e. sitting in your grandmother's lap.
- Practice this image several times and really get into the feeling of calm.
- As you feel confident, use when you face minor irritations, i.e. a long stop light.
- Continue practicing with more intense irritations, so that you'll feel comfortable using when feeling overwhelmed by trauma memories.
- Another technique is grounding. When beginning to feel anxious, stand, put your weight forward and your feet flat on the ground.
- Continued...

SUGGESTIONS CONTINUED

- Be present in the moment.
- Notice surroundings.
- Describe to yourself what you see either out loud or to yourself. Observe without judgement. Ex. “I see a round clock on the wall that has a second hand and the time is 2:13 p.m.
- Tell yourself, “I am here in this room at this moment. Those memories are from the past. This is now.”

THE THRIVE MODEL

- The THRIVE model consists of six stages, arranged in a logical sequence moving from awareness of change to actually changing thoughts, behaviors, and emotional states.
- **T**aking Stock – Inventory of strengths.
- **H**arvesting Hope – One finds hope within, allowing to see down the road in a positive manor.
- **R**e-authoring – Open up to new ways of thinking about things. AKA Reframing. Move from victim to survivor, to thriver.
- **I**dentify Change – Monitoring changes as they begin to appear.
- **V**aluing Change – One nurtures the positive changes they experience. Notice strengths, abilities, and interests that one was not aware of before.
- **E**xpressing Change in Action – One puts the changes into action and makes them part of life.

TAKING STOCK

- Immediately after trauma, the brain is concerned with threat, not thinking.
- Each person is different and needs to take their own time.
- May go on automatic pilot.
- Important to focus on self and strengths.
- Client checks for physical safety.
- Client gets medical, psychological, and legal help if needed.
- Client keeps a healthy diet.
- Client gets enough sleep
- Client gets / stays physically active.
- Client gets “pleasurable time”. Hot bath, massage, hobbies, etc.
- Client practices relaxation. Deep breathing, meditation, recreation, vacations, etc.
- Client practices self-compassion. Self-forgiveness. ****Link to youtube video**
- Client is aware of triggers.
- Client connects with others.
- Continued...

TAKING STOCK CONTINUED

- Client tunes into own emotions.
- Client tunes into body. Muscle memory, phantom pains, where they feel emotions etc.
- Client focusses of what they CAN do and builds on that.
- Client finds opportunities for laughter and smiling.
- Client learns from the past.

HARVESTING HOPE

- Hope can be the spark of change.
- Research shows hope increases: school performance, athletic performance, health, problem solving, and adjustment.
- Hope is the secret ingredient in therapy.
- Be inspired. Look for stories of hopeful people. Inspiring movies as part of therapy. (Movies: Rudy, Pursuit of Happyness, Books: Man's search for meaning, Always looking Up.)
- Hope is fueled by: Goal setting, self motivation, and focus on path to achieve goals.
- Practice hope.
- Be your own cheerleader. Speak to yourself in positive ways.
- The miracle question: "What would your life look like if a miracle happened?"
- Use one's social supports.
- Visualize a positive future.

RE-AUTHORING

- How one thinks of themselves.
- Language is extremely important.
- State in the positive. i.e. “I am a Thriver.” vs. “I am not a victim.”
- Cultivate the growth mindset.
- Change is possible and is an opportunity to grow.
- Use expressive writing. (Fictionalize what happened, write a letter one doesn’t intend to send.)
- You get to change the ending of the fictionalized story. Or change the ending of what you thought would happen at the time of the trauma.
- Since you’re not sending the letter, say whatever you want. No one will see this.
- Use imagination to see things differently a positive way.
- New perspectives create new insights.

IDENTIFYING CHANGE

- Keep a diary of what goes well.
- Ten minutes at the end of the day.
- Even small things.
- i.e. “Little things didn’t bother me that much today. I was able to see the big picture.”
- Journal about the big things also.
- Identify new skill(s) you tried and were successful with.
- Practice nurturing yourself.
- Copy and use the PWB-PTCQ on regular intervals.

VALUING CHANGE

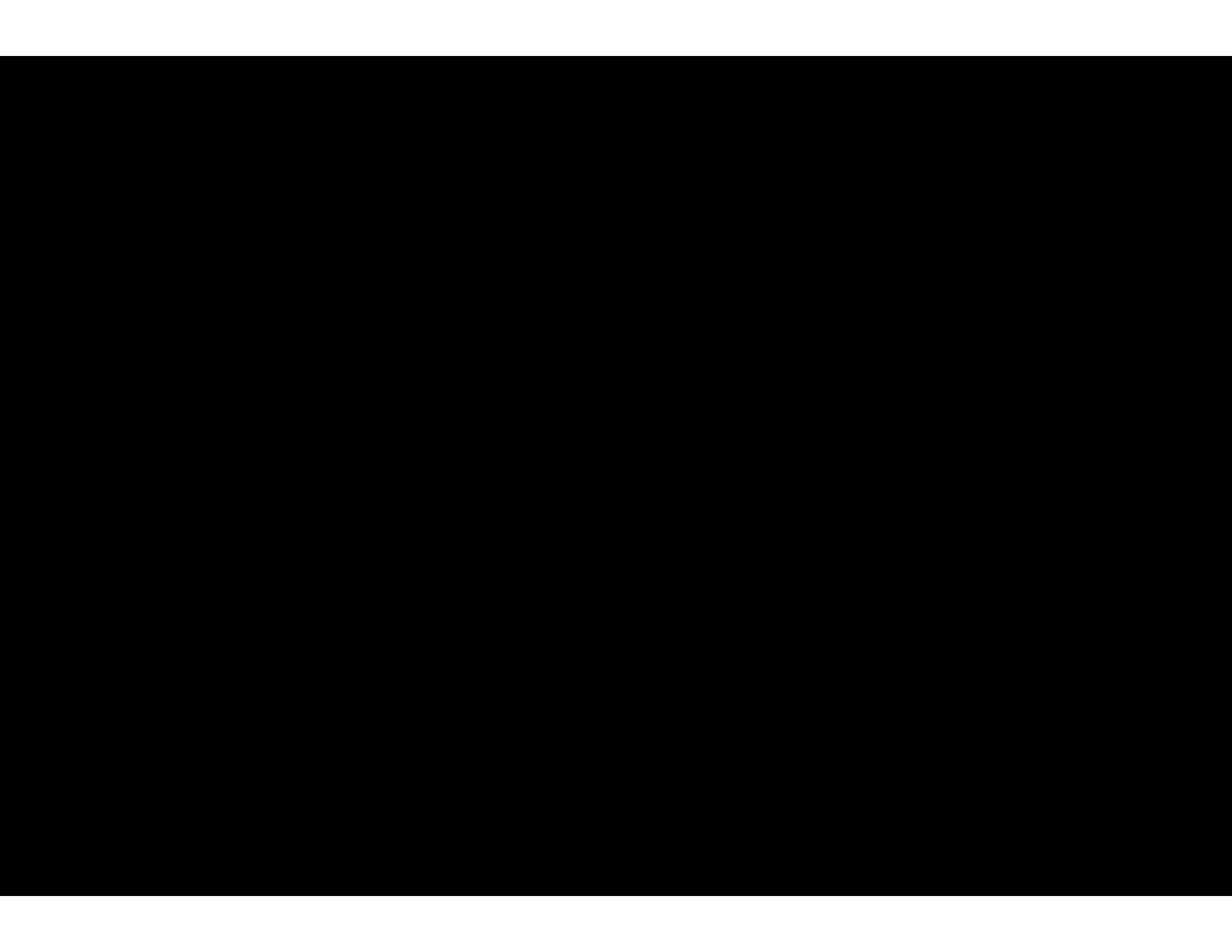
- Nurture the changes you have identified.
- What makes my life meaningful?
- What are my top 5 values?
- What do I do to reflect those values?
- Gratitude list: 3 things you're grateful for, no repeats, and share with trusted person.
- Nothing too small to be grateful for.
- What are my goals for 1 year, 5 years, 10 years?
- How am I valuing the positive changes to myself?
- Write your obituary and / or headstone.

EXPRESSING CHANGE IN ACTION

- Express growth in new behaviors
- Utilize the PWB-PTCQ to measure their personal growth.
- Journal positive changes into actions no matter how small.
- Look to the future of how to express self through activism, advocacy, and/or social action.

CITATIONS

- DSM - V
- Upside. Jim Rendon. 2015. Touchstone.
- What doesn't kill us. Stephen Joseph P.H.D. 2011. Basics Books.



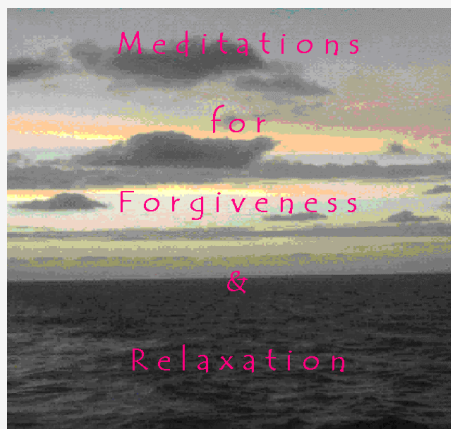
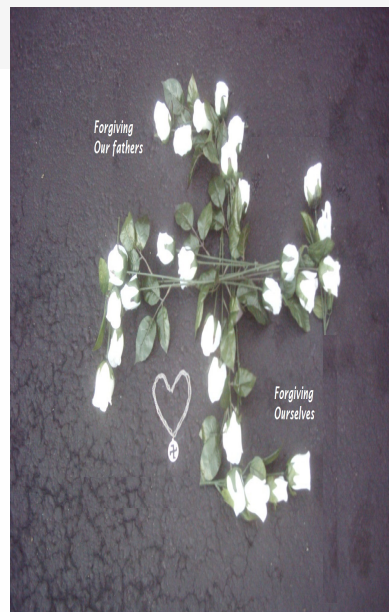
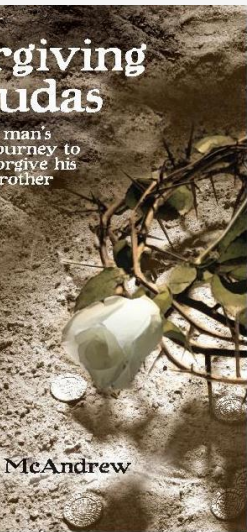
Craig McAndrew MA, LPC, LCAC

4635 Wyandotte suite 204

KC, Mo. 64112

(913)206-5317

kansascitycounselor@yahoo.com



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