5 Domains of Post-Traumatic Growth

**BRUTALLY HONEST OPTIMISM**
Optimism reduces our sense of helplessness when things feel out of control. It also motivates us to take constructive action. However, this is not the Pollyanna, unicorns and rainbows “everything’s going to be okay” brand of optimism; it is tempered by the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of our current reality.

**PERCEPTION OF CONTROL OVER EVENTS**
What makes an experience traumatic is that we were not able to control the circumstances that led to us being harmed in some way. Recovery is about regaining control through primary control (taking action to change a situation) or secondary control (changing our orientation to a situation).

**COPING STYLE**
What is your coping style? Do you immediately start problem-solving (active coping) or do you escape into a fantasy world (avoidance coping)? Both approaches can be helpful, but in the long term, avoidance turns into denial, which prevents you from ever truly living in the present because you are so busy stuffing down your past. The best predictor of post-traumatic growth is “acceptance and positive reinterpretation” - a coping style characterized by optimism and humor.

**STRENGTH SENSE OF SELF**
Having a strong sense of self depends on having a purpose in life, high self-esteem, and being able to create a coherent narrative. Without being able to make sense of our story, we cannot integrate it, learn from it, or get distance from it. A coherent narrative prevents us from unconsciously repeating the lack of connection we experienced with our parents in our relationship with our own children.

**NEW POSSIBILITIES**
- Reprioritize values and time commitments
- Accomplish goals that would have been delayed
- More understanding of friends and family
- Readjust spiritual beliefs to encompass trauma
- Or, revise spiritual beliefs altogether

**GREATER APPRECIATION FOR LIFE**
- Greater gratitude, hope, kindness, leadership, love, spirituality, and teamwork

**CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS**
- Strengthened social ties - can rely on people
- Help craft trauma narratives that contribute to meaning
- Sense of belonging
- Unity

**PERSONAL STRENGTH**
- Stronger for the experience
- Better able to handle blows
- More wisdom and maturity

**SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**
- Greater gratitude, hope, kindness, leadership, love, spirituality, and teamwork

**POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH**
- Readjust spiritual beliefs to encompass trauma
- Or, revise spiritual beliefs altogether
- Reprioritize values and time commitments
- Accomplish goals that would have been delayed
- More understanding of friends and family
- Strengthened social ties - can rely on people
- Help craft trauma narratives that contribute to meaning
- Sense of belonging
- Unity
- Greater appreciation for life
- Stronger for the experience
- Better able to handle blows
- More wisdom and maturity

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