

An Analysis of Posttraumatic Growth: Cultural Considerations

Texas Association
of
Pretrial Services

Katelyn Fuller, LMSW
Licensed Master's Social Worker

Darius Campinha-Bacote, PsyD, HSP
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Certified Trauma Therapist (TF-CBT)

Objectives

- Discussion-driven
- Etiology regarding posttraumatic growth
- Research on posttraumatic growth
- The grieving process
- Reframing trauma
- Treatment recommendations
- Assessment recommendations

Posttraumatic Growth Defined

- The concept of PTG as defined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) describes positive personality and life changes that enhance functioning and result from the emotional and cognitive processing of trauma exposure.
- The authors emphasize that it is not the event itself that is believed to lead to PTG, but rather the struggle in the wake of trauma.
 - Chinese cultural understanding of crisis = danger over...
- Many religions (i.e., Christianity, Hinduism, Islamic belief system, etc.,) believe that through the experience of pain and suffering, an individual can gain knowledge and wisdom, and ultimately grow from the experience.
 - (Linley, 2003)

Posttraumatic Growth vs. Posttraumatic Decline

- Is there a difference?
- It is also suggested that some individuals may blame their faith for what happened, or reject their belief system after the event.
 - (Wortmann & Park, 2008)
- Tedeschi & Calhoun concluded that the more religious an individual is, the more likely they are to experience posttraumatic growth rather than posttraumatic decline.
 - Do you agree w/ this?

Posttraumatic Growth vs. Posttraumatic Decline Cont.

- Research by Cohen, Hettler, and Pane (1998) indicated that “because children are less resilient than adults, we assume that severe stressors experienced during childhood, as compared to adulthood, have less potential for producing posttraumatic growth.” (p. 39).
 - Does this still hold true?
- Data indicates that PTG in youth is quite similar to that observed among adults and can be assessed reliably in childhood and adolescents.
 - Vloet et. al (2017)

Children vs. Family

- In an article entitled “Post-Traumatic Growth Differences In Child And Family Of Sexual Violence Victims” written by Haerani et. al (2023), they analyzed differences in post-traumatic growth in children and families of victims of sexual violence.
- They polled twelve (12) children, and their respective families through the use of the Post-traumatic Growth Inventory for Children-Revised (PTGI-CR) questionnaire for children, and the Post-traumatic Growth Inventory-Short Form (PTGI-SF) for families.
- Results indicated that, although slight, families have higher PTG scores than their children.
- How do these findings inform treatment of children?

Dehumanization

- Robison, Abderhalden, & Joiner (2024) completed research entitled “Dehumanization and the Association with Nonsuicidal Self-injury and Suicidal Ideation in an Incarcerated Population.”
- This study assessed the perception of dehumanization from officers by those currently incarcerated.
- Across two jail settings (n = 410), self-report surveys were administered asking questions relating to perception of officer dehumanization alongside aspects of nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI) and suicidal ideation.
- The findings indicate that perceived officer dehumanization is associated with:
 - NSSI thoughts
 - Actively seeking NSSI
 - Suicidal ideation
 - Not with NSSI (not actually engaging)
- How do we interpret these findings?

Your Perception is Your Reality

- Abderhalden & Alward (2024) wrote “Jailed Individuals’ Perceptions of Procedural Justice and Suicidal Ideation: An Empirical Examination.”
- Although prior research acknowledges the influence of individual characteristics, less research has examined how perceptions of procedural justice relate to individuals’ maladaptive behavior while incarcerated.
- New research has included self-injurious thoughts and behaviors as an outcome of perceived procedural justice for incarcerated individuals
- This study expands on prior work, by exploring perceptions of procedural justice related to SI using a jail sample from the United States (n = 397).
- We found strong support that higher perceptions of procedural justice are related to reduced frequency of suicidal ideation in jail.

Reframing

- What is it?
- How is this valuable (if at all)?
- It is the cornerstone of the Functional Family Therapy (FFT) model.
- “Many individuals are able to reframe these situations into valuable learning experiences, and be positively impacted by these experiences.”
 - (Cadell, Regehr, & Hemsworth, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004)

A Mixture of Emotions

- Why would someone be happy after the death of a loved one?
- Could there be humor in death?
- The type of death may be an important indicator of the emotion that may follow from the griever.
 - Autoerotic Asphyxiation

Length of Time in Grieving Process

- How close you were with them
- Their age, your age, and how close in age you were
- If their death was sudden
- Your family relationship with them
- Your state of mental health before the death
- Whether you had unresolved issues with them
- How your parents or other role models dealt with loss
- Your support system

Stages of Grief?

- Kübler-Ross:
 - Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance
- Bowlby's four stages of grief:
 - Shock and numbness
 - Yearning and searching
 - Despair and disorganization
 - Reorganization and recovery

Modified Kübler-Ross Model

7 Stages of Grief

(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

Shock*

• Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.

Denial

• Trying to avoid the inevitable.

Anger

• Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.

Bargaining

• Seeking in vain for a way out.

Depression

• Final realization of the inevitable.

Testing*

• Seeking realistic solutions.

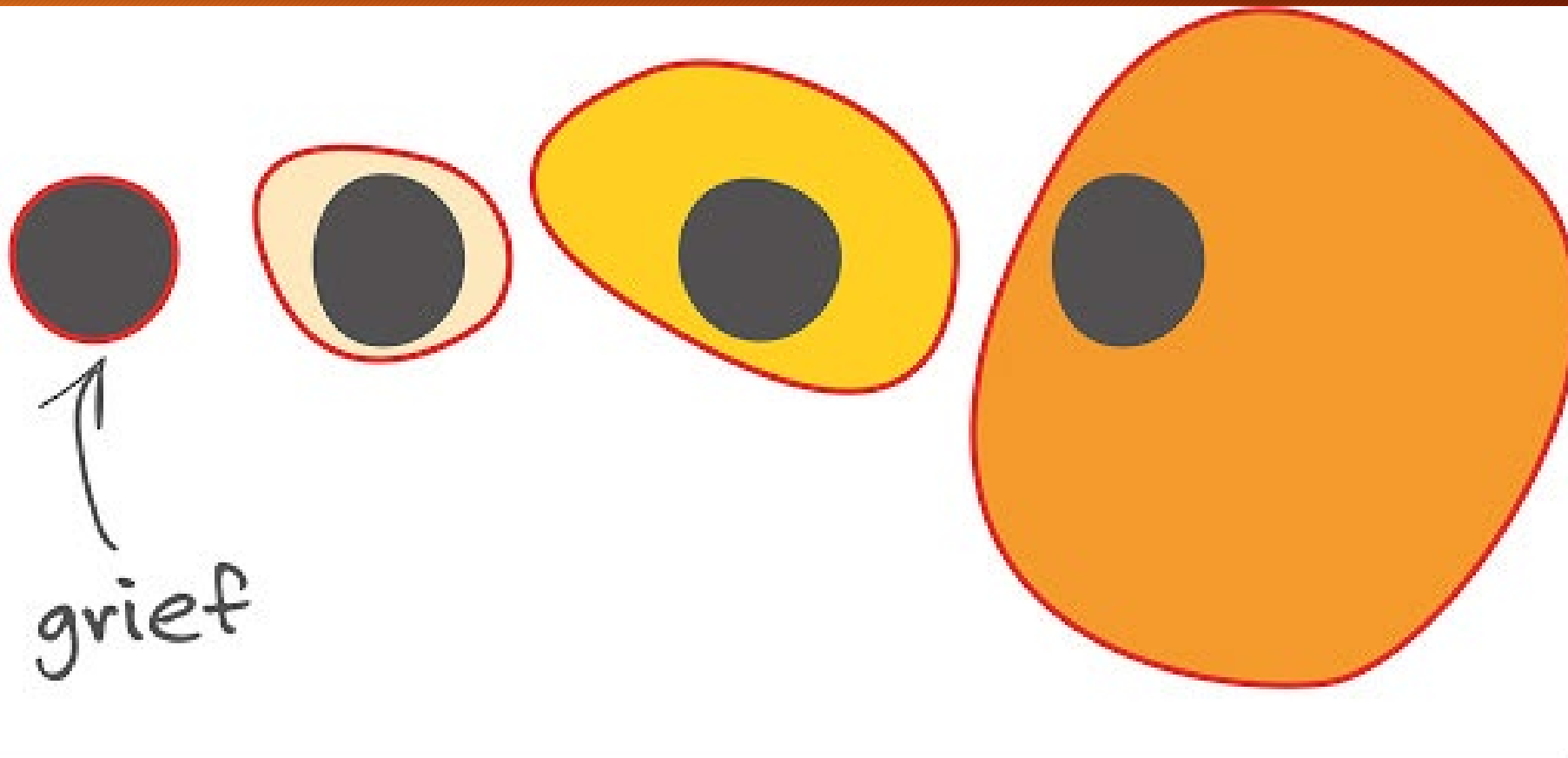
Acceptance

• Finally finding the way forward.

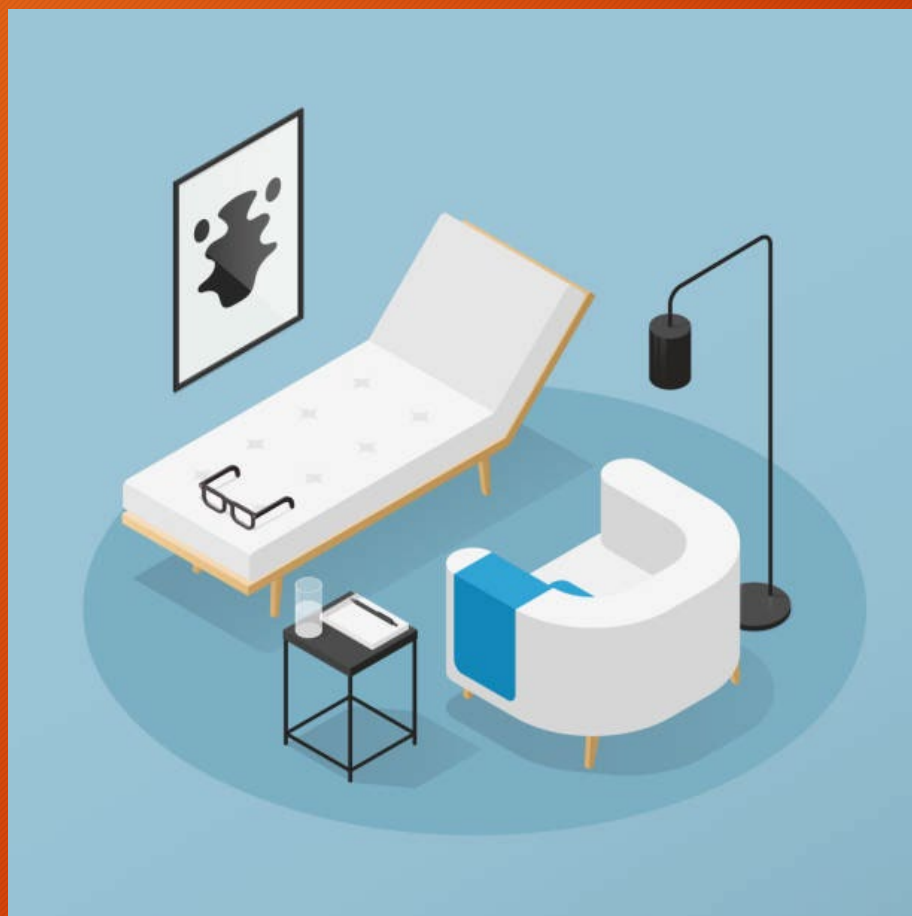
* This model is extended slightly from the original Kubler-Ross model, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. These stages however are often useful to understand and to facilitate change.

Fried Egg Model

- A model presented by Lois Tonkin (1996) challenges the popular belief that grief becomes less invasive and that it goes away with time. Rather, according to this theory, Tonkin suggests that it begins as an all-consuming feeling and that it does not change but suggests that the bereaved person learns to adapt and grow "around" the loss and emotions.



Treatment



Treating Grief

- How do you achieve posttraumatic growth, and does it ever get easier?
- Validation of what that person/animal/item means to the individual...
- Researchers found that many individuals struggling with a traumatic event have found comfort in attending group therapy sessions.
 - Pained shared is pained lessened
 - Bloom; Karakasian; Tedeschi; Tedeschi & Calhoun
- A Meta-Analysis of Expressive Writing on Posttraumatic Stress, Posttraumatic Growth, and Quality of Life
 - Results indicated a small overall effect size for posttraumatic stress (PTSD), and negligible to small effect sizes for posttraumatic growth and quality of life.
 - Pavlacic et. al (2019)

Assessments



Validated Assessments/Tools

- Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)
 - PTG is about accepting the present and moving on without trying to change it. While it may seem hard, survivors agree that letting go is the best way they could overcome the stress.
- Radical Acceptance Worksheet
 - Through the radical acceptance or distress tolerance worksheet, we can target unconditional self-acceptance and commit to loving ourselves after all the struggles and failures in life. The sheet consists of seven questions, and the responses to each indicate where we lie in terms of self-acceptance.

Use of the Revised Posttraumatic Growth Inventory for Children

- Kilmer et al. 2009 conducted a study consisting of children impacted by Hurricane Katrina utilizing the PTGI-C.
 - 12–months and 22–months post-hurricane
- 86.8% endorsed experiencing at least one hurricane-related trauma
- 63.2% of children reported that Katrina was one of the “most scary” events they had experienced.
- Overall, children and families reported substantial adversity and, one-year post-Katrina, 21% of children obtained scores suggesting probable posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Nearly all reported experiencing at least one posttraumatic stress symptom much or most of the time during the previous month.

Revised Posttraumatic Growth Inventory for Children Continued

- Notably, spirituality items were among those on which children reported the most absolute growth.
- This may reflect children's contexts, a region widely regarded as high in religiosity.
- Their responses may also have been influenced by adults encouraging faith-based coping or framing faith-based explanations for their experience.
- This result points to a need to explore the importance of culture and context in PTG and the role of caregivers in the process.

Quotes

- Let's see what our community thinks...

Questions?

- Any answers?