

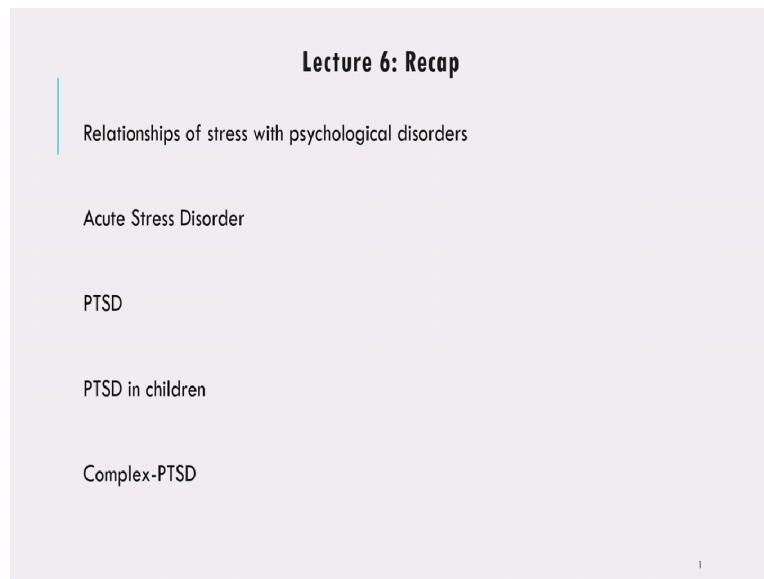
**Psychology of Stress, Health, and Well-Being**  
**Professor Doctor Dilwar Hussain**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati**  
**Lecture 7**  
**Positive Effects of Stress and Trauma 1**

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<b>Lecture 7: Positive Effects of Stress and Trauma 1</b>	
<b>Key concepts</b>	
Potential positive effects of stress	Types of Trauma and PTG
Posttraumatic growth (PTG): Introduction	3 Models of PTG
Dimensions of PTG	
PTS and PTG	

I welcome you all to the seventh lecture of the NPTEL MOOCs course, titled Psychology of Stress, Health, and Well-Being. So, this is the first lecture of module three. Today, we will talk about the positive effects of stress and trauma, first part. And we will have one more lecture on this aspect. So, before we talk about today's lecture, let me have a brief recap of lecture six.

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So, in the last lecture, we talked about the relationship between stress and psychological disorders. So, we have been discussing in the last few lectures, how stress is connected to various diseases, including physical diseases as well as mental disorders. And we tried to understand that stressful experiences, particularly traumatic experiences or high-intensity stressful experiences, can lead to the development of psychological disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety disorder, acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder. And, in particular, we have discussed two disorders that are connected directly to stressful experiences.

One is acute stress disorder, and another is post-traumatic stress disorder. So, we have discussed that acute stress disorder primarily happens when we experience a traumatic event or witness a traumatic event, and it may include various symptoms such as anxiety, re-experiencing of the symptoms, avoidance of the symptoms, dissociative symptoms, such as amnesia and kind of feeling discontinuity between yourself and your environment and your mind. Acute stress disorder is a short-term reaction to the trauma, and it may last from two days to four weeks, that is, 28 days. And if these symptoms persist beyond one month, then generally, it has the potential to be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder. Then we have discussed post-traumatic stress disorder, which is more popularly known in the common parlance. We have discussed that PTSD can happen as a long-term effect of the trauma, especially when symptoms persist for a long term.

more than one month. And in that context, we have discussed that post-traumatic stress disorder has evolved from combat history.

So, in World War I and II, as well as the Vietnam War, many war veterans encountered some symptoms after or during the war, which were very common, and people used terms like shell shock, war neuroses, war fatigue, and so on to describe these symptoms. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association included PTSD as a formal diagnosis for the first time in the DSM–III, following the recommendations of a variety of activist groups, including the war veteran's movement, feminist movement, and holocaust survivors. So many different movements took place around post-traumatic stress disorder, leading to the recognition of PTSD as a formal diagnosis in the DSM–III in 1980.

And then, we have discussed the primary symptoms of PTSD includes four categories. One is re-experiencing of the traumatic events again and again, and then avoidance of the traumatic stimuli related to the traumatic events. So, you try to avoid it as much as possible because it reminds you again and again. Then the negative thoughts and feelings that start or worsen the traumatic events is another symptom that was included in the last DSM. The last is hyperarousal that leads to high physiological arousal, startle reaction, and so on. So, those four categories of symptoms, when they persist for more than one month, generally it is considered as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Then we spoke about how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can affect children. The issue with children is that diagnosing PTSD in children is very difficult and complicated, owing to the fact that children are unable to articulate the symptoms that need to be conveyed. Separation anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, loss of newly acquired developmental skills, and so on are some of the additional symptoms that children exhibit that are not captured by standardized scales and instruments used for diagnosis. As a result, it becomes very difficult to diagnose PTSD in children. However, several studies have shown that children may suffer from PTSD symptoms as well.

Last but not least, we spoke about complex-PTSD, which was coined by a psychiatrist named Judith Herman, who was looking at particular traumatic experiences that were prolonged and repeated, such as torture. And she discovered that in such cases, a standard PTSD diagnosis

might not be sufficient. And a lot of people were doing a lot of research in that direction as well. It was also included in the most recent ICD-11 as a formal diagnosis of psychological disorder.

So, in general, complex-PTSD develops after a series of long-term traumatic incidents, such as torture, sexual assault, being held captive in a war zone, and so on. As a consequence, in addition to PTSD symptoms, complex-PTSD involves symptoms such as self-identity disturbances, emotional dysregulation, trouble establishing relationships, and so on. So, those are the few points we addressed in the previous lecture.

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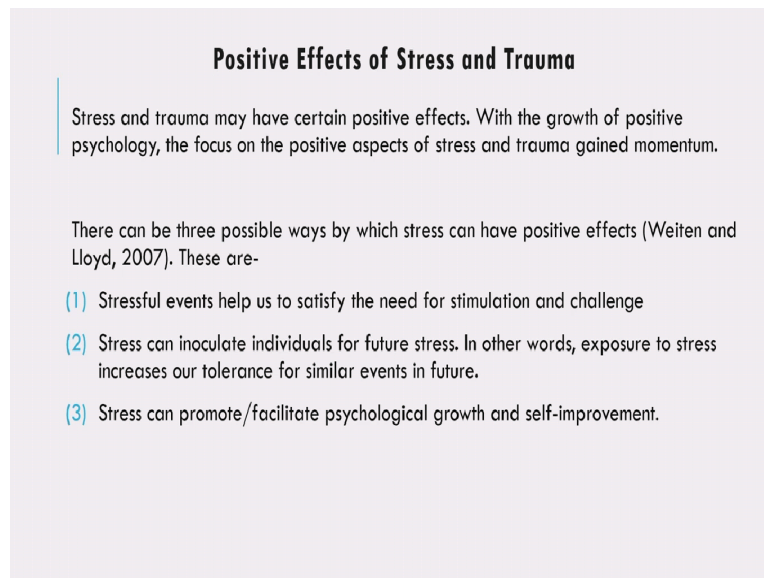
<b>Lecture 7: Positive Effects of Stress and Trauma I</b>	
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Today, we'll discuss the positive effects of stress and trauma. So far, we've mainly spoken about the negative aspects of stress and trauma, which are more generally faced by individuals, since the beginning of the lectures. And it has become more ingrained in our minds. However, it is difficult to visualize and comprehend the positive effects of stress and trauma in general. People don't talk about it often because it's not something we see all that much in our daily lives.

As a result, we'll go over some of the ideas, such as the positive effects of stress. In that context, we'll talk about a term called post-traumatic growth. We'll also discuss the various aspects of post-traumatic growth. In addition, we will discuss the relationship between post-traumatic stress and post-traumatic growth. We'll also discuss the various types of traumatic events that can result

in post-traumatic growth, as well as some explanatory models. We'll discuss some other aspects of post-traumatic growth in the next lecture.

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**Positive Effects of Stress and Trauma**

Stress and trauma may have certain positive effects. With the growth of positive psychology, the focus on the positive aspects of stress and trauma gained momentum.

There can be three possible ways by which stress can have positive effects (Weiten and Lloyd, 2007). These are-

- (1) Stressful events help us to satisfy the need for stimulation and challenge
- (2) Stress can inoculate individuals for future stress. In other words, exposure to stress increases our tolerance for similar events in future.
- (3) Stress can promote/facilitate psychological growth and self-improvement.

So, stress and trauma may have some positive effects that aren't always considered, but there are some positive effects. These things are coming, and more and more research is being done in those fields, especially with the growth of positive psychology as a branch of psychology that focuses on the positive and bright side of life in particular and how to cultivate those positive qualities. As a result, there are some potential beneficial effects of stress and trauma. So, in general, there are three ways in which stress may have a beneficial impact. One is that stressful experiences provide us with stimulation and challenge. So, one thing that we all want in our lives is some kind of stimulation and challenge. This makes our lives more exciting and motivates us to take action.

So, if you don't have any stress, you'll probably be bored with your life and won't have any stimulus or motivation to do anything. As a result, stressful events often serve to stimulate you, providing you with energy, a boost, and encouragement to do something. And there may be some individual variations in this regard, such as some people requiring more stimulation while others requiring slightly less stimulation. But we all need some kind of stimulus to inspire, stimulate, or motivate us to do different things in our lives. As a result, stress will provide the stimulation. So, in that sense, it serves a positive function.

Another way that stress can have a positive impact is that it can inoculate people against potential stress. So, inoculation is basically a concept that is related to the vaccination theory, where what we do in vaccination is basically introduce certain weak strained or dead strains of virus or bacteria into your body that are not dangerous. As a result, the body is exposed to certain bacteria and viruses and prepares for future threats. As a consequence, the immune system of the body is prepared. As a consequence, if such a danger arises in the future, the body will be ready. That's how vaccines function in general. Similarly, stressful experiences, when we have them in our lives, can act as an inoculant or prepare us for future stress. As a result, we are now prepared. We know how to cope with life's challenges and pressures. As a result, the more traumatic situations we face, the better prepared and stronger we become to face future ones. A stressful or traumatic experience can also stimulate or encourage psychological development and self-improvement, which is the third way it can be beneficial. So, this is very important; it is the stressful circumstances and the challenges in life that stimulate psychological growth and self-improvement. Without challenges, difficulties, and stressful events, we will not grow in our life. So, it provides that necessary stimulus for growth in life, psychological growth, and self-improvement. So, this is very important, and we will particularly look at this third aspect in more detail using a concept called post-traumatic growth.

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### **Posttraumatic Growth (PTG)/Stress Related Growth**

#### **As a result of crisis/disasters-**

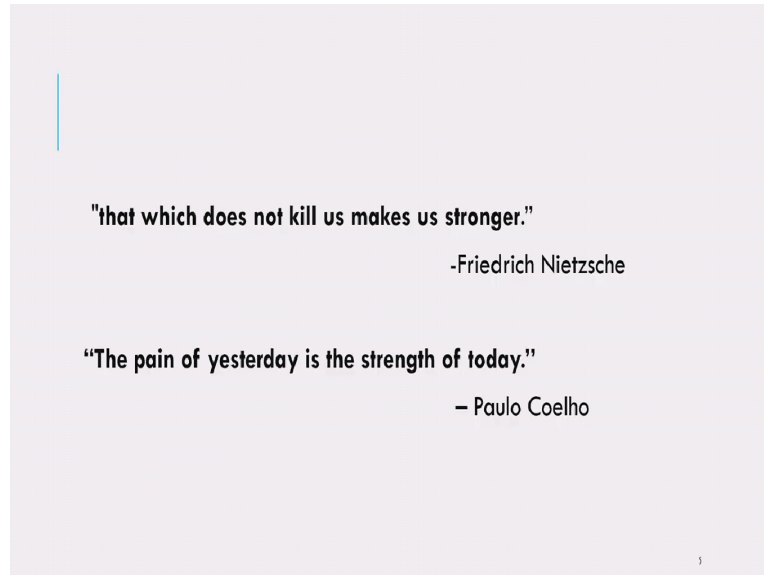
- I have more compassion for others.
- I put more effort into my relationships.
- I developed new interests.
- I know better that I can handle difficulties.
- I discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was.
- I have a better understanding of spiritual matters.
- I can better appreciate each day.

-Sample items from the PTGI by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996)

Now, before we talk about what is post-traumatic growth or stress related growth, let me give you some items of scale that was developed to measure post-traumatic growth by Tedeschi and Calhoun in 1996. They asked people how much of these statements apply to them as a result of a crisis, tragedy, or some other type of difficulty or crisis in their lives. Items included statements such as, as a result of crisis or difficulties or adversities in your life, I have more compassion for others. I put more effort into my relationships, I developed new interests, I know better that I can handle difficulties, I discovered that I am stronger than I thought I was, I have a better understanding of spiritual matters, I can better appreciate each day. So, these are some of the sample items.

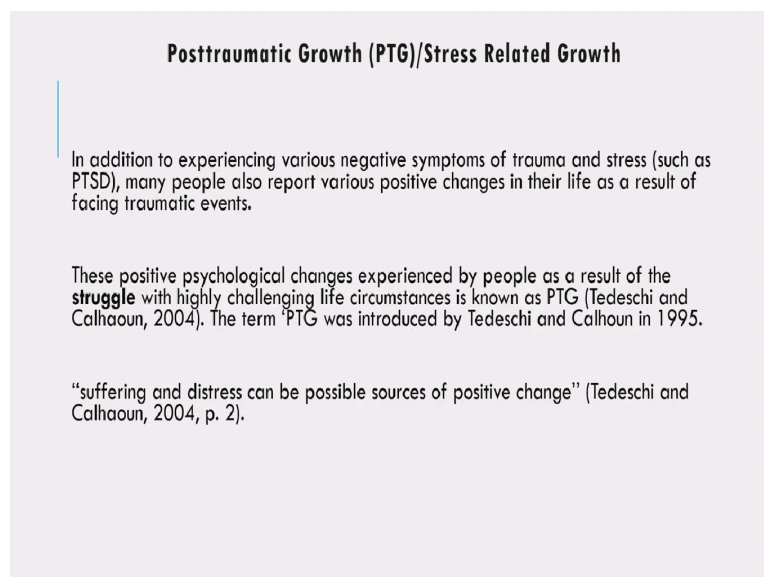
So, if you can relate to these items in your own life or at least you have witnessed this kind of change in other people's lives as a result of adversities or disasters in their life, you might have a sense of what post-traumatic growth is all about. So it is; basically, certain positive changes that happens in the lives of people because of some crisis is called post-traumatic growth. And these are some of the typical examples of such growth.

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Now, philosophers and poets have captured post-traumatic growth in numerous aphorisms; for example, Nietzsche once said, "That which does not kill us makes us stronger." So, this is a concept that all of us can relate to: overcoming adversity and challenges makes us stronger, or that the suffering of yesterday is the strength of today. As a result, people who have endured suffering in the past become stronger for future events or activities.

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So, just as we discussed with post-traumatic stress disorder, which is associated with negative symptoms, following traumatic events. Similarly, it's likely that some growth symptoms or positive functioning emerge following a traumatic incident, which might be counterintuitive in terms of understanding how this occurs. So, let's see what the most important research findings or theoretical concepts are in this area. As a result of facing traumatic experiences, many people experience various positive changes in their lives, in addition to experiencing various negative symptoms of trauma and stress, which we have already addressed in depth in the last few lectures, such as PTSD. So, in addition to many negative symptoms, many people reported many positive changes in their lives, at least they have undergone or many positive changes as a result of traumatic event.

Post-traumatic growth refers to the positive psychological changes that people experience as a result of struggling with difficult life circumstances. So PTG, or post-traumatic growth, is a term that encompasses all of the positive changes or transitions that occur in people after they have been exposed to traumatic events. And it's important to note that PTG, or post-traumatic growth, does not occur as a result of traumatic events; rather, it's the struggle that people face in relating to life circumstances following traumatic events. As a result, growth is dependent on struggle, confronting, and processing information following a traumatic event. So, it's not the trauma, but how people cope with it. How people cope with the aftermath of the event? That, at least according to theorists, is essential for post-traumatic growth to occur. This concept, post-traumatic growth, was first used in the literature of psychology by these two individuals, Tedeschi and Calhoun, in 1995. As a result, they employ the concept that pain and misery can be a catalyst of positive change.

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PTG is not a direct result of trauma but rather related to how the individual struggles as a result of the trauma (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004).

Coping is necessary but not sufficient to achieve psychological thriving or PTG.

Thriving represents more than a return to equilibrium following challenge.

Research indicate that PTG experiences are fairly common and outnumbers the reports of psychiatric disorders. For example, one study reported that approximately 30% - 90% of the survivors of traumatic events report at least some positive changes following trauma (Tedeschi, Park & Calhoun, 1998).

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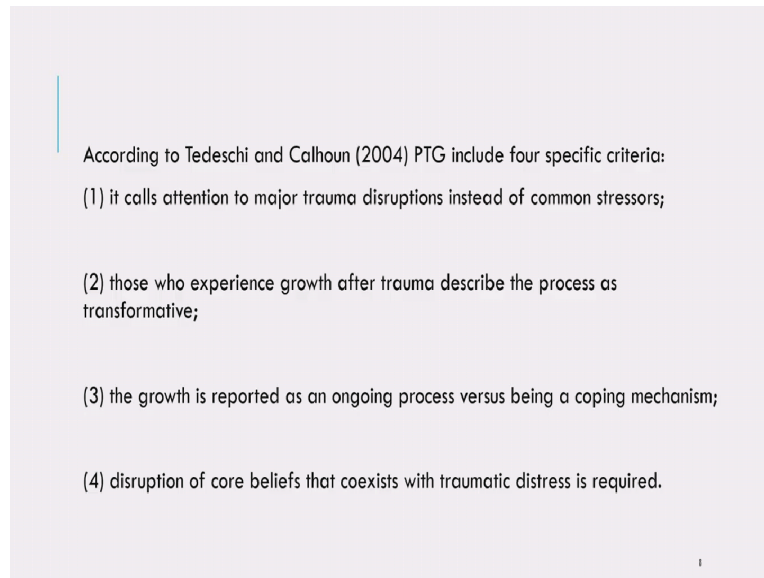
So, as I have already discussed that PTG or post-traumatic growth is not a direct result of trauma but rather related to how the individual struggles or manages those post-traumatic life situations and his inner psychological realities as a result of trauma. So those management part plays a more important role than the trauma itself.

So coping is necessary, but it is not sufficient for psychological growth. So, it is not just coping with a traumatic event. In coping with the traumatic event, one may just go through the normal level of functioning after coping. But PTG connotes the idea of some kind of positive transformation, and a person is not just returning to his baseline level of functioning before the event, but rather, it is some kind of positive change, which was not there before the event.

So, thriving or PTG represents more than return to equilibrium following challenge. So, you do not just return to your homeostatic level or equilibrium level just before the event that has happened. PTG connotes the idea of some kind of transformation that is positive. So, it is not just returning to the previous level of functioning. So, this is one important distinction that we need to understand when we talk about just recovery or other concepts. So, we will be discussing a little bit more some of the other related concepts. Research indicates that PTG experiences are fairly common and outnumber the reports of psychiatric disorders. So, I mean, research shows that it may look that post-traumatic growth experiences are extraordinary experience, which is

experienced by few fortunate people, no, it is not true actually. Research shows that it is very commonly experienced by ordinary people. And in fact, some research indicates that approximately 30 percent to 90 percent of survivors of traumatic events report at least some positive changes after traumatic events. So, it is fairly common, not an extraordinary thing that only a few people experience.

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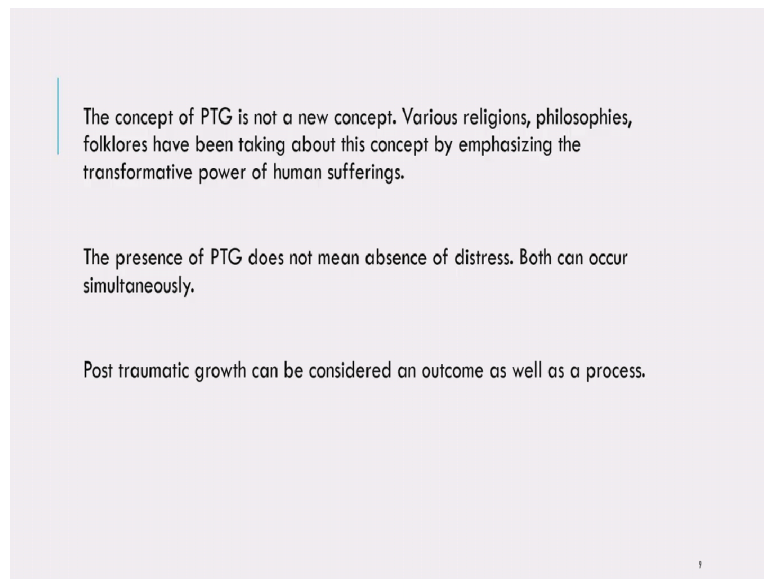
So, according to Tedeschi and Calhoun in 2004, for PTG, the following criteria are important. One is, PTG calls attention to major traumatic disruption instead of common stressors. So generally, PTG happens after some major traumatic event, which disrupts your life. So, transformation can always happen after some kind of major disruptions in your mental and physical world; generally, normal common stressors or daily hassles may not do that. So those kinds of events generally do not stimulate post-traumatic growth. For post-traumatic growth to happen some kind of major traumatic event and disruptions are required.

So, those who experience growth after trauma describe the process as transformative. So, one important idea with post-traumatic growth is that it is generally experienced as a transformative experience. So, something new has been added to your personality or in your psychological makeup, which was not there before the event. So, some transformation happens. So, it is a transformative experience, not just a coping experience.

Third, the growth is reported as an ongoing process and not just as a coping response or something. So, it could be an ongoing process, as well as also as an outcome. We will discuss more in the next lecture, how this happens by using a model. So, there may be many processes that may happen while leading to post-traumatic growth.

Fourth is the disruptions of core beliefs that coexist with traumatic distress is required. So, core beliefs are generally disrupted after traumatic events, and this disruption actually kind of leads to a newer belief system that comes up, or you kind of reformulate your life based on newer core beliefs, which are generally considered as post-traumatic growth. So, disruptions of core beliefs also take place or is required for PTG to happen. So, these are some of the basic ideas.

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Now, the concept of post-traumatic growth is not a new one; as you might have guessed, we've all learned about it from various folklore tales, from various philosophers, and from various religious ideas. As a result, the concept is very old. However, in terms of empirical study in the field of psychology, it is clearly a new concept. This idea has been discussed in various religions, philosophies, and folklores.

We've all heard stories of great heroes, children's stories, and even movie and television themes. So, a hero is someone who has faced adversity and has been able to overcome it and become a living example for others. So, these are all concepts about post-traumatic growth. A hero does not emerge from a life of leisure, but rather from a life filled with adversity. This is a common occurrence that we see in stories, movies, and other media. So, they're all connected to the concept of how people overcome adversity and challenges in life.

Various thinkers have discussed it, including many existential philosophers such as Viktor Frankl and Nietzsche, of whom we have already spoken. As a result, they've been discussing how pain and challenges in life can lead to change. Various religions have often spoken about it; almost every religion emphasizes the importance of suffering in the purification of the heart and spiritual growth. When people struggle and experience challenges, it may lead to spiritual growth as it purifies one's heart and allows one to look at life from a deeper perspective. For example, Buddhism has a fundamental concept of suffering in its core religious ideas. The

central principle is that life is full of suffering, and that in order to evolve and be free, you must go beyond those sufferings. As a result, these concepts can be found in all religions, beliefs, myths, and folklore. So, this isn't a new concept; we've all heard of it. But more systematic academic research seems to be happening in the field of psychology, which is relatively recent.

Another crucial point to remember when discussing post-traumatic growth is that it does not imply the absence of distress. Post-traumatic growth does not imply that an individual would appreciate trauma, distress, or pain. No, that isn't how it works. So, though one can still feel the pain and distress of the trauma, PTG may occur concurrently.

As a result, both can occur at the same time. So this isn't the polar opposites of a continuum. Post-traumatic growth can be thought of as both a process and a result. Some people consider it to be a process, albeit a never-ending one. And some people assume that it is a result of a struggle.

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**PTG and related concepts**

PTG is sometimes confused with some related concepts such as resilience, recovery, thriving, and flourishing.

**PTG vs Thriving**

Thriving is defined as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning” (Spreitzer et al. 2005, p. 538).

Although thriving is associated with growth, it is more often understood as an everyday occurrence and is not normally linked to traumatic or significantly adverse experiences (Maitlis, 2019).

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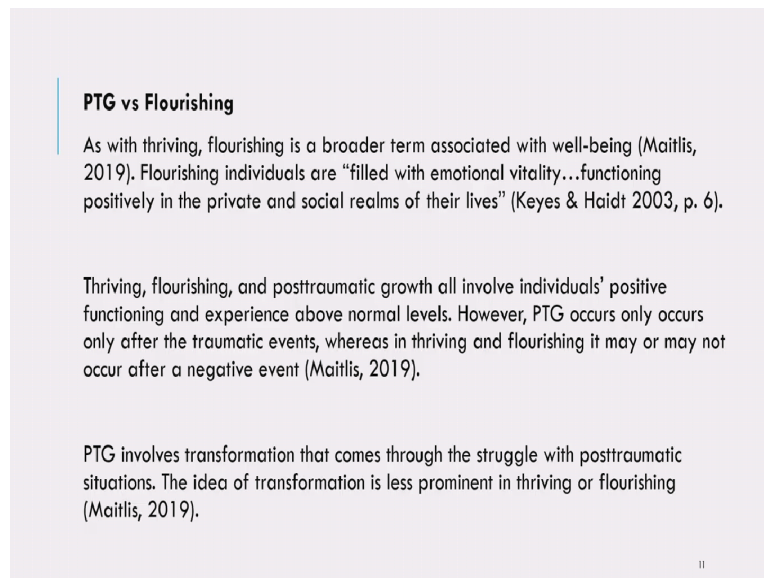
Now, let us quickly look at some of the related concepts. There are several ideas relating to the development or improvement of personalities, which seem to be somewhat close to the concept of post-traumatic growth. However, there are slight distinctions in these concepts. So I'll just try to differentiate between those words and the PTG.

PTG is often confused with similar terms such as resilience, recovery, thriving, and flourishing. So, these are some of the concepts that often imply some positive functioning in life. But how do they differ from post-traumatic growth? So, how does PTG vary from the idea of thriving?

Thriving is now characterized as a psychological condition in which people feel both vitality and learning. So, a thriving life is essentially a life that is expanding, where you feel a sense of vitality in your life, and where you are constantly moving and rising in life. So your life is continually changing and increasing, and it is a fully functional life. Thriving is linked to growth. So, when you are thriving, you experience some form of growth. As a result, change is taking place in your life and in your personalities. However, it is more commonly perceived as a common occurrence. So, thriving can occur in daily normal life experiences and is not always associated with a traumatic event. So it is not important to have a traumatic experience in order to thrive. So, thriving is associated with general life experiences, and it can occur at any point in your life. However, post-traumatic growth specifically happens as a result of a traumatic event.

So, PTG occurs only after a traumatic event; however, a traumatic event is not needed for thriving. So, this is the fundamental distinction between thriving and post-traumatic growth.

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**PTG vs Flourishing**

As with thriving, flourishing is a broader term associated with well-being (Maitlis, 2019). Flourishing individuals are “filled with emotional vitality...functioning positively in the private and social realms of their lives” (Keyes & Haidt 2003, p. 6).

Thriving, flourishing, and posttraumatic growth all involve individuals' positive functioning and experience above normal levels. However, PTG occurs only occurs only after the traumatic events, whereas in thriving and flourishing it may or may not occur after a negative event (Maitlis, 2019).

PTG involves transformation that comes through the struggle with posttraumatic situations. The idea of transformation is less prominent in thriving or flourishing (Maitlis, 2019).

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Another word used in the well-being literature that is similar to thriving is flourishing, which is actually a very similar concept. Mostly connected with the concept of happiness. Individuals who are flourishing are full of emotional vitality and perform well in both their private and social lives. So, it is also similar to flourishing, but it is more often used in the sense of well-being.

And when you have emotional vitality and functioning, you are able to work at a high level in both your personal and professional lives. So, again, this is a concept that can occur without traumatic events or life crises, but PTG often occurs in response to traumatic events, while thriving and flourishing can occur after a negative event or not. As a result, it is not always linked to a negative or traumatic incident. Another crucial point to consider is that post-traumatic growth often means a transformation that occurs as a result of a traumatic event. When we speak about thriving or flourishing, however, thriving and flourishing are not necessarily associated with traumatic events. Furthermore, transformation is not a significant concept associated with thriving and flourishing life. However, transformation is a fundamental concept in PTG.

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#### PTG vs Resilience vs Recovery

PTG is different from the concept of Resilience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back and go on with life after a hardship. Resilient people return to their baseline level of functioning very soon after the hardship.

PTG on the other hand is not about returning to the baseline, rather it is an experience of improvement that is deeply profound and significant for the concerned person.

Resilience can be seen to differ from posttraumatic growth in that it emphasizes stability in the context of trauma, rather than a trajectory of increased positive functioning (Maitlis, 2019).

Recovery is also different in that it involves a return to prior levels of functioning after a crisis, rather than a trajectory of increased functioning (Maitlis, 2019; Bonanno et al. 2011).

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Resilience is another concept that is often confused with PTG. The distinction between resilience and post-traumatic growth and recovery is often misunderstood. PTG is not the same as resilience. So, resilience is described as the ability to bounce back from adversity and get on with one's life. As a result, people with high resilience are able to bounce back quickly from adversity and resume normal functioning in their lives.

Resilience is described as the ability to bounce back and resume normal functioning following a setback or adversity in life. So, it's more of a skill that people possess; some people are extremely resilient, while others are not. People with lower resilience can take longer to return to normal functioning after a setback, while those with higher resilience are more likely to bounce back quickly and resume functioning after a setback.

So, resilience is primarily concerned with achieving or returning to your baseline level of functioning following adversity, so that you can resume your previous level of functioning. As a result, there is no concept of transformation. However, resilience is often linked to the concept of a traumatic incident.

PTG, on the other hand, isn't just about getting back to where you were before the traumatic event; it's about experiencing a change, a transformation, or a positive transformation that is profound and important for the individual concerned. So you don't only return to baseline

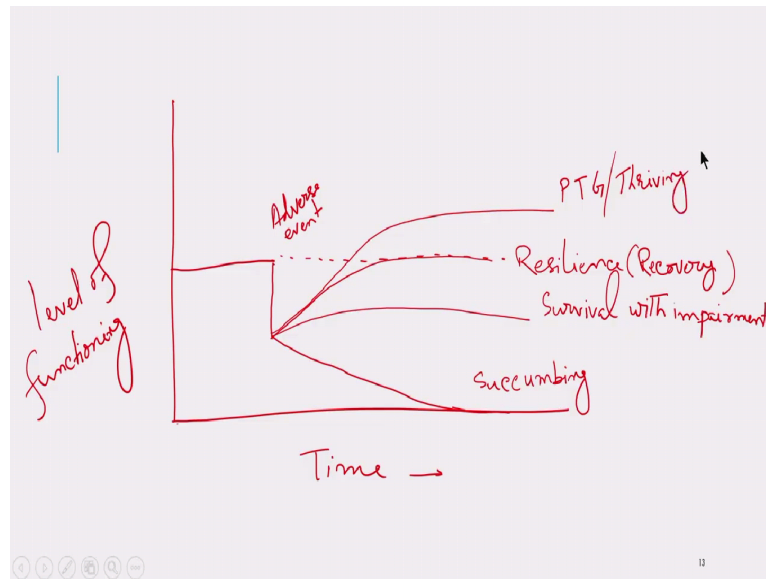
functioning, but you go above the baseline functioning in some aspects of life, while resilience returns you to your baseline level.

So, resilience differs from PTG in that it stresses stability in the context of trauma, allowing you to become stable and retain your homeostasis after the trauma. In PTG, it is more about increased positive functioning, which is kind of an added aspect to your personality after a traumatic event.

Now, another concept, the concept of recovery, is that it is returning to baseline functioning and that it is more of a phase, that recovery is more of a process. As a result, you take some time to recover from those life issues and return to your baseline stage. Resilience is more of a strength, a quality that aids you in bouncing back.

So, these are some of the distinctions between post-traumatic growth and some of the associated terms that have positive connotations and are often confused. So, those are some of the main distinctions. As a result, PTG is often addressed in the sense of a traumatic event, the changes that occur as a result of the traumatic event, and the majority of these changes are positive.

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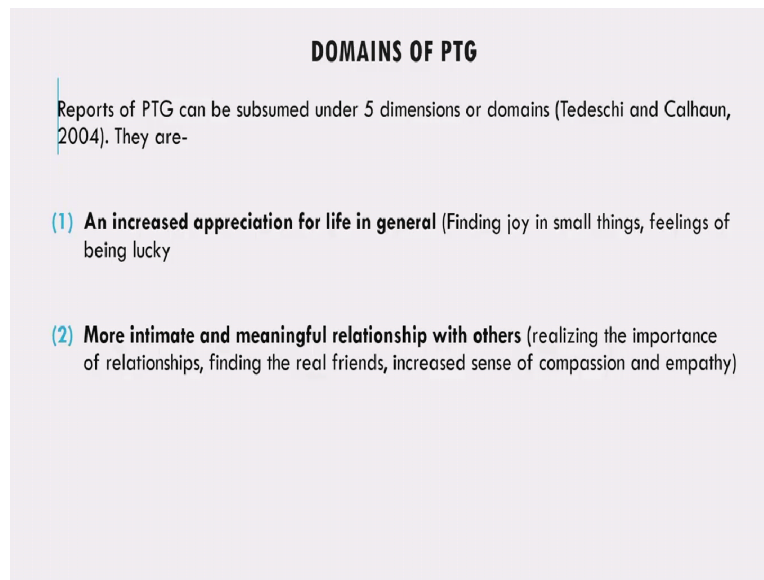
So, with this diagram, we can understand different changes that happen after a traumatic event in life. So, in the trauma literature generally, we have, way of showing these different changes. This graph shows the level of functioning on one axis and the passage of time in another axis. So, let us say this is your normal level of functioning. And at this point, some traumatic event happens or some adversity happens. Then immediately, your functioning goes down. And some people may completely succumb to the, so we can call this line as the line of succumbing. So, let us say, after a traumatic event, the functioning level goes down for a person and he/she is not able to deal with the life difficulties and perform daily functioning. So, some people may completely succumb to it and get into various disorders like PTSD and many other psychological disorders, probably depression and other anxiety disorders.

Some people don't go too far into the disorder, but they sort of survive with it. Their functioning level isn't up to the mark, but they kind of survive, but not to the point of psychiatric disorder. Some people revert to their previous state of functioning, which was their usual state of functioning, which we referred to as resilience. Here, people return to their previous level of functioning.

For certain people, this can cause them to function at a higher level than normal. PTG, or thriving life experiences, is what we're calling this one. So the individual is operating at a level

that is higher than average, that is, higher than it was before the traumatic incident, in a certain dimension, obviously not all dimensions, but certain dimensions. As a consequence, positive improvements and transformations that are above and above normal functioning can be referred to as post-traumatic growth, thriving, or flourishing experiences.

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**DOMAINS OF PTG**

Reports of PTG can be subsumed under 5 dimensions or domains (Tedeschi and Calhaun, 2004). They are-

- (1) An increased appreciation for life in general** (Finding joy in small things, feelings of being lucky)
- (2) More intimate and meaningful relationship with others** (realizing the importance of relationships, finding the real friends, increased sense of compassion and empathy)

According to research studies, post-traumatic growth experiences may occur in a variety of areas of life. It isn't just a one-dimensional phenomenon; people report growth in a variety of areas. PTG is usually experienced in five dimensions. The first dimension is a greater appreciation of life in general.

Now, this can seem counterintuitive and paradoxical in the sense that how can anyone appreciate life after a traumatic event? In general, it seems counterintuitive, but if you think about it, particularly if some people have had near-death experiences such as car accidents or have survived a chronic illness like cancer, people understand the importance of life and no longer take it for granted because they understand how fragile life is and how it can end at any time.

Perhaps, as a result of their encounters with such traumatic events, in which they nearly died and then came back to life, they value life more in general than they did before the incident. Because most people take life for granted, but a traumatic experience will make you realize how fragile it is and how you can't take it for granted.

So, people start appreciating life in general, in terms of, let us say, finding more joys in small things of life, they will value small things of life, such as moments with people they are close to, they will cherish those moments more because they give more meaning to their lives and increase the value of their lives, feelings of being lucky to survive.

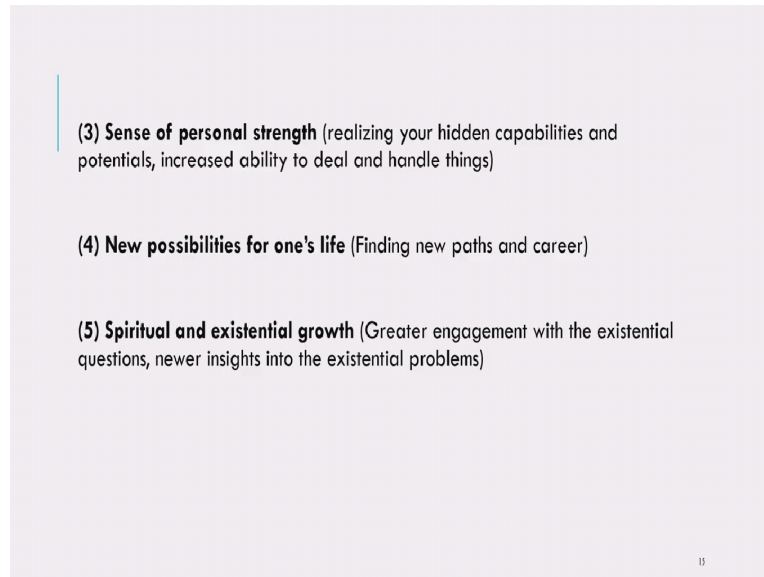
These are some of the things that people typically report or experience, and research indicates that after a traumatic incident, people's appreciation for life also rises, mainly because they recognize the importance of life, the fragility of life, and the need to cherish life more. After the traumatic experience, they see all of these vital aspects in a new light. As a consequence, this could be called a growth dimension.

More personal and meaningful relationships with others are another dimension where people report post-traumatic growth. Still, it is only in the light of traumatic events that relationships or social support come to the forefront or become more important in life; it is only when we encounter challenges that we need help from others, that we appreciate the importance of friendship and relationship more, that we understand the value of friendship and relationship more.

So, as we encounter challenges, we learn more about the importance of relationships. When difficulties arise in one's life, we also discover who are our true close friends and who are false friends. Otherwise, it's difficult to tell who is really loyal to you or cares for you from others who are more shallow and fake relationships. Traumatic experiences and adversity in life teach you the value and significance of finding meaning in your life or in positive relationships. You realize the value of relationships when someone supports you through a tough situation, and you realize how important social support is in interpersonal relationships. As a result, a great deal of tension and difficulty is alleviated simply because someone is there to assist you. You find true friends that are true friends, and often people grow more compassion and empathy after a traumatic event or life's difficulties, simply because when you encounter difficulties, challenges, and traumatic experiences firsthand, you develop more compassion or empathy towards people who are experiencing similar difficulties and problems. You can now relate to their situation. As a result, you have a greater sense of understanding and empathy. As a consequence, all of this

can be interpreted as a dimension of post-traumatic growth and as a kind of new shift in the individual.

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People usually report a sense of personal strength in the third domain of post-traumatic development. So, when we speak about surviving traumatic events or life challenges, this is obviously the most important dimension that comes to mind. People who survive traumatic events or life challenges gain a sense of personal strength that they were unaware of prior to the incident.

So many people discover their hidden potentials, strengths when they face adversity in their lives. When they go through or navigate through that adversity, people become aware of their hidden talents and strengths which they were previously unaware of because it was not needed at the time. However, as tragedy hits, you'll need more talents, abilities, and potentials, which are already inside you but aren't being completely recognized and used at the time. And you also come to know for the first time that you are capable of many things that you did not believe you were capable of before the case. So, let's say something happens and you unexpectedly need to take on new jobs and businesses, which you previously felt you wouldn't be able to manage. However, after a life crisis, you can now do it with ease. So, as a result of the new position you've taken in terms of managing a family business, you've found that you can do a lot of things that you couldn't before. As a result, improved capacity to cope with and manage situations, as

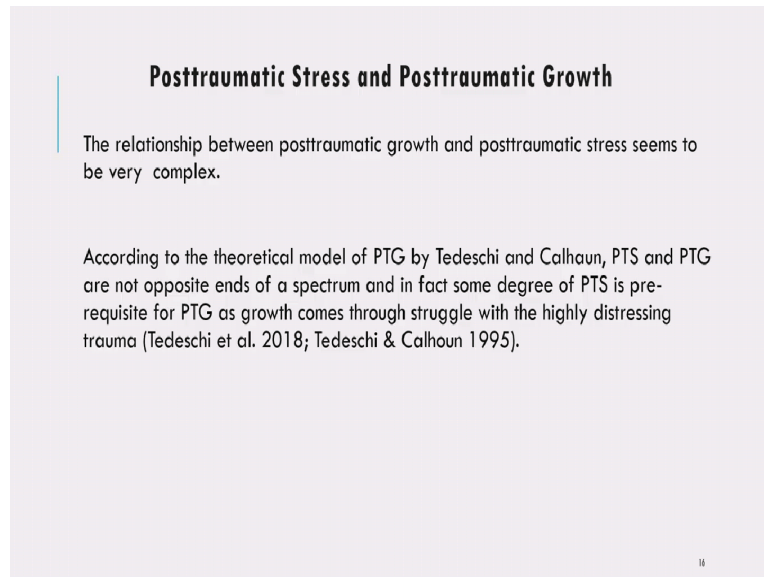
well as other aspects of post-traumatic growth, can all be articulated as a dimension of post-traumatic growth.

The fourth dimension, according to most people, is new possibilities for one's life. Many people develop new possibilities in their lives after witnessing a traumatic experience, such as seeking new paths and professions. Many people's life paths are completely altered as a result of an incident. They will embark on new careers or assignments in their lives that they have never considered before. For example, many people who have survived a traumatic incident, such as cancer, will volunteer to support other cancer patients or similar patients. Alternatively, some people who escape sex trafficking come out and may create an NGO to assist people who are struggling or who are victims of similar circumstances, such as sex trafficking. As a result, they establish a new purpose in their lives to assist people who are similar to them based on their personal experiences. As a consequence, these are referred to as new life possibilities. You would see newer paths and careers, as well as newer missions or meanings in your life, in radically new ways, and you would change your life trajectories in a completely new way. As a result, such drastic changes can occur as a result of traumatic events.

Spiritual or existential growth is the fifth dimension that people usually report after a traumatic event. As a result, people only ask deeper questions about life during times of trauma, such as what is the essence of life. What is going on with me? What is the point of it all? Only when faced with difficulty can people become more analytical and deeper in terms of asking or dealing with existential questions. In general, we do not ask such deep spiritual questions when we are happy. However, adversity and struggles in life, as well as sufferings in life, may often prompt such questions, as well as a greater focus on the existential side of life. And many people gain newer insights into existential issues, and they find new meaning in life. They may recognize the fragility of life, the futility of superficial life, and experience new spiritual development. For example, it was clear that for certain people, this occurs in a dramatic manner. One well-known story is that of Gautam Buddha, who left his kingdom to pursue spiritual enlightenment after experiencing some problems or sufferings of human life, such as death, illness, and old age. Only witnessing a few sufferings of life was enough for him to leave his kingdom and seek spiritual enlightenment. As a consequence, it could have such a profound effect on certain people's lives. Others can experience it in a less dramatic way. However, such adversities and difficulties often

stimulate spiritual or existential development, in which you engage with more fundamental life questions. So, these are some of the aspects of post-traumatic growth that people report after traumatic events, according to studies.

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**Posttraumatic Stress and Posttraumatic Growth**

The relationship between posttraumatic growth and posttraumatic stress seems to be very complex.

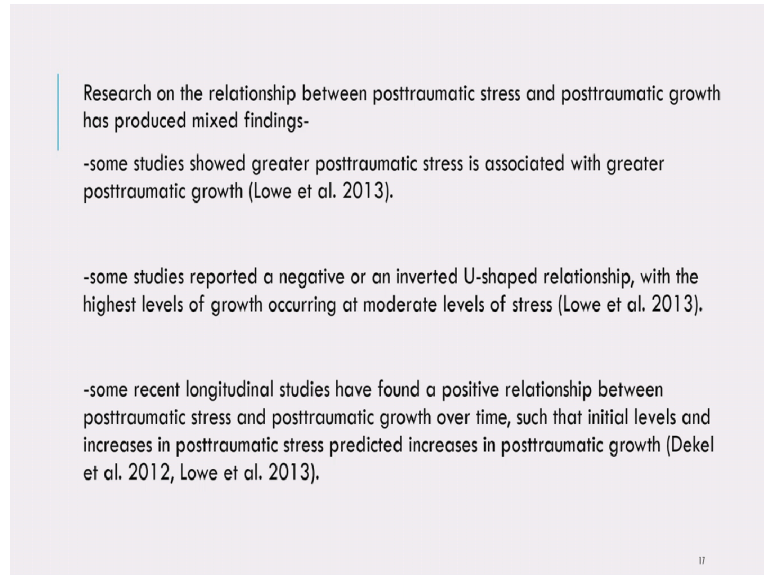
According to the theoretical model of PTG by Tedeschi and Calhoun, PTS and PTG are not opposite ends of a spectrum and in fact some degree of PTS is pre-requisite for PTG as growth comes through struggle with the highly distressing trauma (Tedeschi et al. 2018; Tedeschi & Calhoun 1995).

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Now, we will see briefly what the relationship between post-traumatic stress and post-traumatic growth is? So, we have discussed post-traumatic stress and disorder elaborately in the last few lectures. What is the relationship between post-traumatic stress and growth? Research shows that the relationship is very complex, actually, but the theoretical model, which we will discuss in the next class of Tedeschi and Calhoun, said that post-traumatic growth and post-traumatic stress are not an opposite spectrum, opposite dimensions of a spectrum. But rather, both coexist together, and some level of post-traumatic stress is actually required for PTG to happen. So, without distress, PTG will not happen.



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Research on the relationship between posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth has produced mixed findings-

- some studies showed greater posttraumatic stress is associated with greater posttraumatic growth (Lowe et al. 2013).
- some studies reported a negative or an inverted U-shaped relationship, with the highest levels of growth occurring at moderate levels of stress (Lowe et al. 2013).
- some recent longitudinal studies have found a positive relationship between posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth over time, such that initial levels and increases in posttraumatic stress predicted increases in posttraumatic growth (Dekel et al. 2012, Lowe et al. 2013).

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And many studies have come up with results that confirm that hypothesis. Greater post-traumatic stress, for example, has been linked to greater post-traumatic growth in some research. As a consequence, the higher the stress, the more likely PTG will occur. Other studies indicated a U-shaped relationship and findings indicating that the highest level of growth occurred at moderate levels of stress.

According to several recent longitudinal research, there is a positive association between post-traumatic stress and post-traumatic growth over time, with initial levels and increases in post-traumatic stress predicting increased post-traumatic growth. So, at least at first, a higher level of post-traumatic stress predicted higher post-traumatic development. So, at the very least, longitudinal studies, which are more accurate in terms of monitoring people's changes, say that.

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### Types Of Traumatic Events and PTG

Research suggests that PTG is a common experience for individuals after a traumatic event. In general, it has been claimed that the nature of the event itself is less important for posttraumatic growth than the way that an individual experiences it (Maitlis, 2019). Research has indicated PTG resulting from diverse traumatic experiences-

#### Personal traumatic experiences and PTG

Research indicated reports of PTG after personal losses such as-

- bereavement (e.g., Davis et al. 1998);
- medical problems (e.g., Helgeson et al. 2006);
- interpersonal violations, such as rape and other forms of sexual assault (e.g., Frazier et al. 2001).
- community traumas, such as natural disasters (e.g., McMillen et al. 1997) and terrorism (e.g., Updegraff et al. 2008).

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Now, studies have shown that post-traumatic growth can occur after a number of traumatic events, including different forms of traumatic events, and that it is a normal phenomenon, not an unusual one. And it has been generally claimed that the nature of event itself is not that important. However, the way a person experiences and deals with the trauma is more important for post-traumatic growth. We've already discussed it, so the part about struggling is more important.

So, research has shown that PTG can result from a variety of traumatic events. For example, PTG has been recorded by people after a variety of personal traumatic experiences, such as bereavement, loss of a loved one, or death of a loved one. PTG was triggered by a variety of medical conditions, including cancer, HIV, and a host of other illnesses. The studies on those patients have revealed that they report PTG in a variety of dimensions. Victims of multiple interpersonal crimes, such as rape and other forms of sexual harassment, have also reported PTG. PTG has also been identified after community-level trauma such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks or extremism, which stimulated some growth in some dimensions.

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### Work related traumatic experiences and PTG

PTG research remains surprisingly small in the context of work and organizational life. However, a small body of research explored PTG in certain job contexts which are vulnerable to trauma (Maitlis, 2019).

#### *Inherently traumatic work/job*

PTG has been reported in many inherently traumatic work such as-

- military (e.g., Mark et al. 2018, Tsai et al. 2015),
- police (e.g., Chopko et al. 2018, 2019),
- emergency services (e.g., Sattler et al. 2014, Shakespeare-Finch et al. 2003), and
- disaster/rescue work (e.g., Paton 2006, Shamia et al. 2015).

Together, this research shows that although doing such work often leads to posttraumatic stress and PTSD, it can also prompt posttraumatic growth (Maitlis, 2019).

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PTG has also been documented as a result of traumatic experiences at work or in the workplace. Surprisingly, not much research has been carried out in this context. Only a few studies have been performed in the context of work in organizational life. However, a limited body of research looked at PTG in specific work settings that are prone to traumatic events. For example, some occupations are inherently traumatic, such as defense and defense-related jobs such as military and police, where they often experience or at least witness traumatic incidents. People who serve in emergency services, such as firefighters and others, as well as disaster and rescue workers. So, these are occupations that are inherently traumatic, jobs that cause you to be exposed to traumatic events on a regular basis, or at the very least observe traumatic events. Many studies in this inherently traumatic job and the people who work in such jobs have shown that PTG can occur in any of these inherently traumatic jobs.

So, although doing such work sometimes causes post-traumatic stress, it's important to note that post-traumatic stress and disorder can occur in any circumstance involving traumatic events or occupations. PTG, on the other hand, may occur concurrently. And we must realize that people who have undergone post-traumatic growth do not appreciate trauma. It's more like newer insights that emerge as a result of the struggle. Even after undergoing post-traumatic growth, trauma is still painful, challenging, and distressing for people.

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### **Secondary trauma at work**

Secondary or vicarious trauma is regular part of job of professionals whose work can be traumatizing because it involves supporting others who have been traumatized.

Research indicated PTG among health professionals such as labor and delivery nurses, psychotherapists, social workers, interpreters, clergy, and funeral directors (Cohen & Collens 2013; Manning-Jones et al. 2015).

In many of these cases, PTG is linked to the change and growth that workers witness in their clients, which prompts in those workers a new appreciation of what is possible, in terms of the difference they can facilitate, and in some cases it may prompt a spiritual broadening (Manning-Jones et al. 2015, cited in Maitlis, 2019).

In such cases, empathetic engagement with the clients facilitated secondary PTG (Splevins et al. 2010). Thus, witnessing posttraumatic growth in others can itself be positively transformative (Maitlis, 2019).

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People often experience post-traumatic growth after secondary trauma also. Secondary trauma refers to traumatic events that are encountered by individuals after they have occurred, such as when we encounter traumatic events after they have occurred rather than personally witnessing them, or when we work with people who have been through traumatic events. These are referred to as secondary trauma or vicarious trauma. These are part of professions that involves supporting people who have been traumatized.

As a result of assisting people who have been traumatized, one is exposed to secondary traumatic events. Such vicarious experience may also result in post-traumatic growth. As a result, a study found that numerous health professionals, such as labor and delivery nurses, psychotherapists, social workers, interpreters, clergy, and funeral directors, have experienced post-traumatic growth. So, all these professions require frequent witnessing of traumatic events. Post-traumatic growth has also been documented in many of these secondary trauma-related occupations.

So, in a lot of these situations, PTG is related to the change and growth that they see in their clients, which typically occurs while they are experiencing phenomena. As a result, you see people's struggles with life and how they overcome them. When one encounter such post-traumatic growth experiences in others, especially in one's clients, they may develop or cause or trigger some changes or positive changes in themselves. As a result, one may have a new appreciation for what is possible in life, in terms of the difference you are making in people's lives. It can, in some cases, lead to a spiritual awakening. As a result, seeing changes in people's

lives, particularly positive changes in the lives of clients with whom you are directly involved, can encourage post-traumatic growth in those who experience them.

Research shows that empathic engagement with clients facilitates secondary PTG in the majority of these situations. People who are more engaged with their clients, particularly those who are highly empathetic and engaged with their clients, are more likely to experience PTG. As a consequence, seeing PTG in others may be a positively transformative experience in and of itself. But that brings us to the end of today's lecture. We'll talk about something else tomorrow, specifically the theoretical understanding of post-traumatic growth. What triggers PTG? What is the process of PTG? What are the possible explanations? In the next lecture, we'll try to learn more about the processes of post-traumatic growth. With that, I'll conclude today's lecture. Thank you so much.