



June 2020

A Timely Self-Reflection on Courage, Hope, and Personal Growth

**“When we are no longer able to change a situation,
we are challenged to change ourselves.”**

– Viktor Frankl

We are over 10 weeks into the pandemic. Each one of us truly has their own unique and individual experience to overwhelming loss and transition; yet, a sense of relief may have occurred knowing we are in this together and not alone in our suffering. While days remain uncertain, it is helpful to remember how far one has come. Take notice of one’s own internal resources such as adaptability, courage, and kindness.

It may also be helpful to cultivate a sense of curiosity and ask “*What is this time going to teach me?*” and “*What do I want to stand for in the midst of the crisis?*” The profound burden of suffering is certainly unequal, but the pandemic is still traumatic for everyone. This time has really challenged the way we all think about our lives. Fortunately, everyone has an opportunity to experience and foster what is known as *Post Traumatic Growth (PTG)*. PTG is positive personal changes as a result of a struggle with a major life crisis or traumatic event.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may be aware that some of these things are already occurring for you and your family. Perhaps glimpses of PTG have occurred through a moment of deep connection with a child or a new supportive connection with nature. When one grows to accept that certain situations cannot be changed, PTG can occur in **five general areas**. Please find some pathways below to consider and help foster PTG in your own life. PTG can offer some hope that we can come out stronger and more creative with a deeper sense of meaning.

1. NEW OPPORTUNITIES

- Change can mean new possibilities and progress; a new path forward.
- Keep a journal to take notes on things that inspire you, lessons you have learned, new habits you would like to keep, and what you would like to learn more about.
- Foster a new relationship and respect for the environment and nature.

2. CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS

- Social support and connections are vital to post traumatic growth.
- Embrace the opportunity to deepen bonds.
- Communicate openly with loved ones, admit fears, and reach out to seek help.
- Consider what relationships you would like to grow.
- Pay attention to those who you feel your best self with.
- Practice and foster courage to be your authentic self.

3. INCREASE IN ONE’S OWN STRENGTHS

- Many people have drawn on capabilities they did not know they have, or have not used in a while.
- Notice personal strengths that support you and others in all aspects of your life.
- Take time to reflect on what strengths you bring and what you can feel proud of.
- Consider sharing with a friend what qualities you appreciate about each other.

4. A GREATER APPRECIATION OF LIFE

- Savour positive moments. In tough moments, consider shifting focus to something or someone you treasure. It could be as simple as the sound of laughter or noticing the vibrant colour of a wild flower.
- Connect with your values and what is closest to your heart.
- The pandemic is opening us up to an opportunity to really consider what and who is important to us. Consider living your values every day by combining values with activities; for example, in daily tasks like cooking dinner. Consider asking your child to help you.
- End your day with a gratitude journal or incorporate gratitude as a family ritual and daily conversation.

5. DEEPENING OF A SPIRITUAL LIFE

- While not everyone has a faith-based practice, everyone can grow a spiritual side that can offer peace and purpose. Spirituality can be developed.
- By having a sense of meaning, loving and being loved, being of service to others, being present and mindful.
- We can ask ourselves: can we sit in the midst of this and find quiet?

Remind yourself that the only moment we truly have is "right now." Try to enjoy and honor time in the present moment. Mindfulness is contagious and can spread quickly to others!

“Life is available only in the present moment.” - Thich Nhat Hanh

Take some time and listen to some guided meditations:

- <https://elishagoldstein.com/>
- <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>
- <https://www.rickhanson.net/being-resilient-during-coronavirus/>

Post traumatic growth is different for everyone. The process cannot be rushed and can take time. Learning about ourselves and each other is inevitable right now as we collectively emerge from the pandemic. We can come together and share our vision of what brings us meaning, ways we notice our own growth, and find quiet moments to pay close attention to what we care about.

We're here to help!

Over the next many weeks, Vancouver Island Counselling will consider a deliberate, thoughtful and slow return to safe in-office services. In the meantime, telephone and video counselling services will continue to be provided. These modalities are effective, impactful and provide significant advantages during times like these.

*If you have questions, need information
or wish to book an appointment,
Please call us at one of our numbers listed.*



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