The latest advances in the theoretical, empirical, and clinical aspects of Posttraumatic Growth

Posttraumatic Growth and Culturally Competent Practice offers contributions from an international group of experts in posttraumatic growth (PTG) within diverse cultures and subcultures. It uniquely illuminates the nature, meaning, and clinical implications of PTG across a wide range of sociocultural contexts.

Edited by Tzipi Weiss and Roni Berger—recognized experts in the areas of stress, coping, and PTG—this book features contributions by an international panel of renowned scholars and clinicians, offering a truly global perspective of PTG in cultures and regions including:

- The Middle East
- Israel
- Germany
- The Netherlands
- Japan
- China
- Australia
- Latinos in the U.S.

Offering research-based insights and practical interventions, this collection enables practitioners to offer informed and culturally sensitive services to those who have survived trauma in different parts of the world, and to support these survivors as they grow and harvest benefits from their ordeal.

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“Posttraumatic Growth and Culturally Competent Practice: Lessons Learned from Around the Globe brings welcome attention to applying PTG to culturally competent practice worldwide. It delivers on the promise embedded in its title: lots of lessons within the fourteen chapters.”

—From the Foreword by Charles R. Figley, PhD, Kurzweg Chair in Disaster Mental Health, Tulane University, New Orleans
Posttraumatic Growth and Culturally Competent Practice
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Lessons Learned from Around the Globe

Edited by
Tzipi Weiss and Roni Berger
To Ari, Bob, Dan, George,  
and Tami who always help us grow.
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Foreword

TRAUMA LESSONS MORE OFTEN THAN TRAUMA LOSSES

The emerging concept of PTG is a kind of salve to the hurting soul of the traumatized. Most people have no unwanted consequences of trauma exposure and many gain valuable lessons. This is in contrast to the many years of PTSD research, which focused on the negative consequences. What is emerging in the current century is a growing recognition and appreciation of the resilience of the human spirit, despite the impact of major catastrophes such as the recent bush fires in Victoria, Australia, the Indian Ocean tsunami, the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC, and Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures in the U.S.

Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in 1995 introduced the term PTG as a way of representing reports and later research findings about the beneficial effects of the struggle with traumatic events. This is the latest book to tap the experiences of researchers and practitioners around the world who have found the presence of PTG; that there are gems of good news among the sad and depressing stories of the traumatized. It is to their credit that PTG is now part of the assessments and theories most utilized by those helping the traumatized.

Tzipi Weiss and Roni Berger’s Posttraumatic Growth and Culturally Competent Practice: Lessons Learned from Around the Globe brings welcomed attention to applying PTG to culturally competent practice worldwide. They deliver on their promise imbedded in their title: Lots of lessons within the fourteen chapters.

The first chapter is written by the founding fathers of PTG (Calhoun & Tedeschi) with the help of Arnie Cann. Together they suggest that PTG researchers and practitioners must adopt a more sociocultural/contextual orientation for both measuring and predicting PTG. Their new model suggests that the active ingredient in understanding thriving among the traumatized is, among other things, the critically important indicator of resilience and thriving as the meaning making ingredient that is embedded within survivors’ culture.
The other chapters focus on widely divergent cultures and the application of culturally competent practices related to PTG. They include Israeli Jews, Palestinians, those in Turkey, Kosovo, the Germans, the Dutch, Spaniards, U.S. Latinos, Japanese, Australians, and the Chinese-Australians.

In the final chapter the editors call for research that can further develop the concept of PTG and how best to apply these findings toward promoting thriving and human development. This is easier said than done because PTG is, in essence, a re-framing of reality. When does re-framing become self delusion? To be blunt, when does PTG become a problem of perspective and reality? Some argue that PTG is often a temporary draft of meaning making; that later drafts are far more realistic. What is important, according to fundamental models of human development, is stability, low stress, and if there is stress, ways of returning to the set point. PTG is an indication of a cognitive shift among the traumatized.

Weiss and Berger, throughout their book, remind us that PTG is a representation of the societal values of the culture and the meaning making narratives they stimulate. Thus, for example, the chapter on Spain includes reports of how the collectivistic culture leads to a kind of “communal coping” via participation in political demonstrations. While the chapters show diversity in the structure of PTG across cultures, the cultural factors are the necessary but not sufficient ingredient in accounting for differences that often are affected by the interplay between culture and coping with adversity.

The reader will find that this book not only illustrates the expanding and culturally sensitive nature of PTG, but also the importance of culturally competent practice generally. This volume, through the editors and chapters authors’ contributions, challenges trauma researchers to be more culturally competent in their conceptualizing, planning, carrying out, and reporting the findings of those outside their own culture.

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About the Editors

Roni Berger, PhD, LCSW, was born and raised in Israel. Dr. Berger holds a BSW, MSW, and PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Diploma in Psychotherapy from Tel Aviv Medical School. She serves as a professor at Adelphi University, a consultant to various professional organizations, and maintains a private practice. Her fields of expertise are immigrants; families, specifically stepfamilies; posttraumatic growth; qualitative research; and group work. She published and presented extensively, nationally and internationally. Previous books include Stepfamilies: A multi-dimensional perspective, Immigrant women tell their stories, and From custodialism to community: Transforming residential settings (with H. W. Polsky). Dr. Berger serves on numerous editorial and advisory boards of professional organizations. Before her immigration to the United States in 1990, she worked in Israel in academia, in direct practice with individuals, families, and groups in the fields of health and mental health. She also held supervisory and administrative positions in diverse social, medical, and educational settings. Dr. Berger has received several awards and grants and served as a Fulbright scholar at the City University of Hong Kong.

Tzipi Weiss, DSW, LCSW, is an associate professor at Long Island University’s C.W. Post Department of Social Work and the director of the undergraduate program. She is a board-certified expert in traumatic stress, an adviser to community organizations, and a clinician in private practice. She studied the biological, psychological, and social aspects of human behavior and received a BA from Tel Aviv University, an MSc from Israel’s Institute of Technology Medical School, an MA from Columbia University and MSW and DSW degrees from Adelphi University. She has worked in mental health agencies serving individuals, families, and groups, specializing in gerontology, psycho-oncology, and bereavement. Her research in the area of stress and coping has focused on posttraumatic growth, psychosocial aspects of breast cancer, and immigration. Dr. Weiss has published book chapters and articles in key professional journals, including Psycho-Oncology, The Journal of Psychosocial Oncology, and the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology. She has presented in conferences in the United States and abroad.
About the Contributors

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**Arnie Cann, PhD**, holds a BS in business administration from Northeastern University and a doctorate in social psychology from Indiana University. He has served as a Professor of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte since 1975, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in social psychology and research methods. His research focuses on the intersection of social and health psychology. He has published on topics like posttraumatic growth, the roles of humor and humor styles in coping with stress, and perceptions of individuals facing trauma, as well as gender stereotypes, gender roles, and intimate relationship issues. In collaboration with Lawrence Calhoun, he has conducted workshops on effective uses of humor for individuals in high stress occupations. He has served on regional and national executive committees for organizations promoting social psychology.

**Lawrence G. Calhoun, PhD**, is a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and a licensed clinical psychologist. Although his parents were North American, he was born and raised in Brazil but completed both his undergraduate and graduate studies.