

The Post Traumatic Growth of a Guardian Healer

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Synopsis

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This book is critically relevant to health workers and others who may develop PTSD because of extreme stress. In the 1970s, I experienced deep traumas while running a hospital in the Central African bush where I had to ration care because of severe shortages of medicines - a situation very similar to the decisions faced by physicians, nurses and EMTs in our overburdened health systems.

During my long career I had repetitive exposure to traumas in places like Afghanistan during the war, Haiti after the earthquake, and Liberia during the Ebola crisis.

My lifetime spent in support of hospitals in the world's trouble spots has been filled with perilous yet life-affirming experiences.

I have been fortunate to participate in some of the most momentous changes of recent history, and to witness events as few others have. While the experiences have been incredible, the cost of my calling has been continued exposure to horror and human suffering, and an ongoing struggle with PTSD.

During over 40 years of repetitive trauma, I have experienced an ongoing cycle of relapse and recovery. The gift of this ongoing effort has been growth from the pain, and ultimately, a new perspective on this life-threatening condition.

The pursuit of post-traumatic growth (PTG) has given me gifts of empathy, compassion, and an understanding of humanity that I could have gained in no other way.

The practice of PTG described in this book clearly shows that PTSD does not need to be a disability for those who are able to turn trauma into growth. In my current role as a PTSD peer counselor, my approach to PTSD mitigation and recovery is to use the principles of "Psychological First Aid" (National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD) in the immediate acute phase. This is then followed by Skills for Psychological Recovery (National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD). Finally, when long-term recovery begins, I use PTG as contained in this book.

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