

Factors associated with post-traumatic growth after the loss of a loved one

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Aim. People exposed to the loss of a loved one run greater risk of experiencing mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, and subsequent mourning can represent a risk factor for psychiatric morbidity. However, many people exposed to a traumatic event experience positive changes in their relationships with others, self-concept and in the philosophy of life. Such cases are defined as cases of post-traumatic growth (PTG), a salutogenic approach favored by a number of factors. This article examines positive changes, social and personal resources that promote PTG in a sample of 201 people, aged 18-69 years, who have suffered bereavement.

Methods. Respondents completed the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory, the Brief Cope and Basic Empathy Scale. Information regarding factors considered to be possible moderators of PTG were also requested. The interviews took place from February to May, 2013.

Results. Scores of PTG were low and related to the time since the event, the employment at the time of the study and the age of the deceased. There were adaptive active coping strategies and the affective dimension of empathy. The main effects on PTG were due to the deceased's age, the time elapsed since the loss, the former location of psychotherapy, some coping strategies (religion and positive restructuring) and affective empathy.

Conclusion. The results have important implications for the promotion of PTG, improv-

ing the quality of life and the prevention of mental disorders associated with mourning.

KEY WORDS: Behavioral medicine - Adaptation, psychological - Empathy - Grief - Stress disorders, post-traumatic.

People exposed to the loss of a loved one run greater risk of experiencing mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder¹ and subsequent mourning can represent a risk factor for psychiatric morbidity.² However, following exposure to traumatic events, they also experience positive changes and continue to have positive emotional experiences,³⁻⁵ including post-traumatic growth (PTG).⁶ PTG is a salutogenic construct⁴ characterized by the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises. Positive changes may include an increased appreciation for life in general, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life.⁷ PTG is favored by many factors, particularly by personal and social resources as well as specific coping strategies.^{8,9} The influence of coping

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