

Post-Traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth is the personal development that occurs after a traumatic event has taken place. Following a court process, it is important for those who were victimized to learn how-to live with their new realities. This is about learning how-to rebuild ourselves in ways that renew our growth and reinvent our existences. You can renew your personal growth by:

- Acknowledging what has taken place, including all the time and energy that it has taken from you;
- Accepting 'right now' as your starting point; and
- Demonstrating self-compassion, as you take time for yourself to heal at your own pace.

Some things to remember are:

- Victimization and tragedy can occur to anyone. Being victimized by a crime does not define you. When you were victimized, all the positive things about you *were* and *are* still *real* and *true*.
- As the court process ends, you may feel emotionally drained, disappointed, angry, etc. It is important to acknowledge these feelings. Remember to also recognize the strength and courage you've demonstrated throughout this process. These are traits that you have gained or improved, and that you can carry forward in life.

Release & Reimagining Strategies

Emotional release begins with allowing yourself to experience your negative feelings or thoughts, and then releasing them. Once you've let go of negative thoughts and feelings, you can begin to reimagine more positive ways of thinking and being.

Reimagining... *Who you were, who you are, and who you want to become.*

The way we see ourselves (*past version, current version, and future version*) influences how we carry ourselves on a daily basis. What we think of ourselves impacts our daily actions and behaviours. After a traumatic event, it is normal for self-perception to change, even drastically. Therefore, it is important to take time to reflect on ourselves and the events that have shaped us. Then, we can move forward with a sense of empowerment and a readiness for action.

Resources

Victim Services:

Crown Witness Coordinator:

Counselling:

RCMP:

Probation:



Releasing Feelings & Reimagining Ourselves

Feelings Matter

Why is it important to work through your feelings?

Your **feelings** influence your **actions**. They also impact your **thinking**, so it is important to know how to shift your feelings to improve your thoughts. Changing your thoughts and feelings will often impact what you do. Taking action can help you feel back in control of your circumstances. When you are victimized, it can feel like you are not in control of anything. This is especially true when going through the court process. It is time to change that!

“I thought by the time this was over I would be feel better”...

This is a very common statement heard following court outcomes.

Common Feelings & Reactions Post-Court Outcomes:

- **Anger / Frustration**
- **Shock / Disbelief**
- **Disengagement (emotional distance) / Numbness**
- **Fear / Helplessness**
- **Disappointment/ Disheartened/ Hurt**
- **Grief / Sadness**
- **Relief / Strong desire to move on**

Mindset is Important

You may find yourself thinking,

“Why bother dealing with my feelings? It’s not going to change anything!”

Understanding how your feelings influence your thoughts may allow you to discover ways to move forward more effectively. For example, you may feel frustrated and think to yourself, “All of this was pointless.” If these types of negative thoughts continue, you may end-up feeling more frustrated, or worse in general. It helps to reach-out; talk with your Victim Services Worker.

An important thing to remember is:

Feelings aren’t right or wrong; they just are.

While this is true; how we process feelings is critical to how we move forward.

Let’s consider this a little more...

Anger & Fear: Both these feelings have the ability to either keep a person very stuck, or to propel them into forward moving action. How is anger affecting you?

Shock & Disbelief: These reactions can have strong physical impacts on your body. You may feel physically ill, jittery, experience chest pain etc. It can also affect your thinking. Your mind may feel foggy, like you can’t think straight, or like you are having an out of body experience. This can take a toll on our physical and mental wellbeing.

Disengagement / Numbness: These reactions are self-protective measures. While they can serve us well for survival, it is necessary to process and move from this state, to avoid isolation. The use of negative coping mechanisms, to feel numb.

Disappointment / Hurt: These feelings, impact our future actions. Therefore, it is crucial to process in relation to accessing the criminal justice system, as it is often the strongest protective measure available for personal safety.

Grief / Sadness: To many these are the scariest of feelings to deal with, as there is a sense that if you allow yourself to express these feelings it will be unending. Grief is a process. It is not fluid and the varied feelings can resurface repeatedly. Counselling can be helpful for guidance and reassurance, so that you will not completely fall-apart when you allow yourself to feel these deep emotions.

Relief / Strong Desire to Move Forward: While this reaction is often the most desired outcome, there is concern that we may bury our feelings, in our quest to get on with things. Our desire to not allow this negative experience to affect us, we may deny ourselves the need to process feelings. This may serve us well in the immediate moment. The reality is, that at some point, our feelings will resurface and may even take us off guard. It is important to know this and to be prepared to seek help when needed.