



Posttraumatic Growth: Whole Person Approaches to Working With Trauma

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Earlier this year, with the support of Dr. Miguel Gallardo, the Health Psychology Section of Division I, under the leadership of Dr. Michael Ritz, created a Taskforce focusing on "Whole Person Approaches to HealthCare: Working With Trauma." I am pleased to chair this group whose members include Drs. Victoria Beckner, Rick Harvey, Eunie Jung, Stanley Krippner, Daniel Pitchford and Morgan Sammons.

The media reports on a daily basis the sequelae of trauma, in particular, the alarming and escalating rates of emotional challenges, suicide, and violence among returning Iraqi war veterans. In addition, female soldiers can suffer from sexual abuse during combat duty and extended family members of soldiers often need assistance and care in dealing with grief and loss. The numbers do not inform about failed relationships, loss of jobs, identity issues or addictive behaviors these individuals face nor about secondary traumas or repressed traumas that may surface. One must employ a multi-faceted approach towards this topic which can focus on the multiple layers of culture, neurophysiology, and psychological as well as spiritual issues.

The Taskforce, therefore, proposes a Whole Person approach to working with trauma that addresses psychological, physical and spiritual aspects of loss and healing. Emerging mind/body approaches to be explored include but are not limited to: breathwork, relaxation, healthy lifestyle, autogenic training, meditation, writing, imagery, EMDR, traumatic incident reduction, healing rituals, life review, making sense of trauma (existential/humanistic), drama therapy, hypnosis, art therapy, dance therapy, poetry therapy, action approaches, religious/spiritual faith and group therapy. All of these approaches have been documented to:

1. Bring together the split body/mind that occurs with dehumanizing terror,
2. Provide a creative means for discharging aggression and restoring interpersonal connections,
3. Strengthen individual and community resilience,
4. Express strong emotions within a safe container,
5. Bridge multicultural symbolic forms, and
6. Allow creativity to symbolize traumatic losses/belief systems and hopes for the future.

Whole person healthcare integrates the best of medical and psychological practices into a biopsychosocialspiritual model – integrating behavior, cognition, and consciousness into body, mind, and spirit dimensions. This approach takes into account the impact of lifestyle on health issues and educates individuals to become informed consumers – practicing prevention and directing their lives towards self-care and health. It relies on experiential as well as theoretical learning and utilizes symbolic and non-verbal as well as linear and verbal modes of thought and expression.

In 2001, the word "health" was included into the mission statement for the American Psychological Association and I chaired a panel discussion on holistic healthcare at their annual convention. The primary focus was to describe a necessary collaboration of psy-

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