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PSYCH > Vol.3 No.12A, December 2012

OPEN ACCESS

## Bringing Back the Body into Positive Psychology: The Theory of Corporeal Posttraumatic Growth in Breast Cancer Survivorship

PDF (Size: 59KB) PP. 1238-1242 DOI: 10.4236/psych.2012.312A183

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is the phenomenon of surpassing levels of functioning than which existed before a traumatic event occurred. The objective of this study was to assess how the body may have had an influence on the facilitation, and as an outcome, of PTG. **Methods:** 83 female breast cancer survivors, 5 years post cancer diagnosis, were interviewed on their long-term experience of physical activity engagement. Inductive thematic analysis was used in order to ascertain whether or not there were any serendipitous expressions of posttraumatic growth. **Results:** 24% (n = 20) of the study mentioned experiencing some form of PTG, including both generic and corporeal specific domains. Of those that reported PTG, 70% were from the original physical activity intervention group indicating potential links between activity participation during cancer treatment and long term PTG. **Discussion:** The results support the theoretical viewpoint that recovery from physical illness may have a unique PTG journey in comparison to more cognitive/external sources of trauma. **Conclusions:** This is the first study to qualitatively collect longitudinal data from a large and unique sample on the experience of PTG following breast cancer survivorship. Furthermore, the author has coined this new addition of a more embodied experience of PTG, the theory of ' Corporeal Posttraumatic Growth' and presents suggestions for future research.

### KEYWORDS

Positive Psychology; Corporeal Posttraumatic Growth; Breast Cancer; Physical Activity; Embodiment

### Cite this paper

Hefferon, K. (2012). Bringing Back the Body into Positive Psychology: The Theory of *Corporeal Posttraumatic Growth in Breast Cancer Survivorship*. *Psychology*, 3, 1238-1242. doi: 10.4236/psych.2012.312A183.

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