

Post Traumatic Growth & Suicide Prevention Agenda Two Day Event

Conference June 17 & 18th, 2026

Overview: This conference is designed to empower medical staff, therapists, military, law enforcement, and peer support professionals with the knowledge and tools to foster post traumatic growth (PTG) in clients and within themselves. By exploring the latest research, clinical practices, and personal experiences, attendees will gain a deeper understanding of trauma, resilience, and healing.

Conference Schedule

Day One June 17, 2026

7:30-8:30 a.m. Registration

8:30-9:00 a.m. Conference Starts Welcome

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Post Traumatic Growth Keynote Address CEU = 1

The focus will be the introduction to PTG theory and the domains of growth.

- **Hugh D. Watt, MSW, LCSW, Executive Director Post Traumatic Growth Project**

Summary: Brigham Young University and University of Denver graduate, Hugh Watt will provide a comprehensive overview of PTG theory, exploring its historical development, core principles, and the five primary domains of growth. He will introduce students to the importance of the Trial Action Path (TAP), Relationships, Inspirational, Appreciation, Limitless Possibilities, and Personal Strength. His personal journey will offer powerful insights into the human capacity for resilience.

At the conclusion of this session participants will be able to:

1. Gain knowledge of the historical development and five foundational principles of the PTG Theory.
2. Comprehend the application and significance of the Trial Action Path (TAP) including the impact on overcoming challenges and setbacks.
3. Synthesize and integrate the transformative power of resilience both professionally and personally.

- **10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Research and Clinical Practice of Post**

Traumatic Growth

CEU = 1

Laura E. Juarez, DPA, PA-C, MPH, Board Member Post Traumatic Growth Project

Summary: University of Touro graduate, Dr. Juarez, will present empirical findings on PTG, illustrating their application through case studies. She will discuss evidence-based interventions for fostering PTG in medical settings and share her clinical experiences.

At the conclusion of this session participants will be able to:

1. Assess empirical evidence and research supporting Post-Traumatic Growth.
2. Apply PTG principles to real-world situations through medical case studies to leverage growth.
3. Formulate practical evidence-based application for personal and professional intervention fostering PTG.

11:00 – 12:00 a.m. Life's Possibilities Redefined: Navigating Trauma Without Toxic Positivity

Ruth Gerritsen-McKane, PhD, MSW, LCSW (UT), LICSW (MN) CEU = 1

Director MSW Field Education, Associate Professor, Regis College – Weston MA

1. The Domain of Possibilities: How Trauma Expands Personal Horizons and Pathways This section examines how post-traumatic growth (PTG) broadens an individual's "domain of possibilities," enabling new avenues for personal development, relationships, and sense of purpose. It highlights real-world examples of survivors uncovering latent strengths, embracing novel passions, and transcending pre-trauma constraints, positioning trauma's aftermath as a fertile landscape for transformative expansion.

2. Reframing Trauma: Cognitive Strategies for Meaning-Making and Resilience Drawing on established psychological frameworks, particularly Tedeschi and Calhoun's foundational PTG model, this section explores practical approaches to reframing traumatic experiences—such as cognitive restructuring—to perceive adversity as a catalyst for positive change. It presents supporting evidence linking this voluntary process to enhanced resilience, deepened empathy, greater life appreciation, and overall psychological growth.

3. Navigating Criticisms: Balancing Post-Traumatic Growth with Authentic Emotional Processing This section addresses key concerns that PTG concepts can inadvertently promote toxic positivity by minimizing pain or imposing pressure to "find silver linings." It advocates for a balanced, nuanced perspective: fully validating grief and negative emotions as integral to healing, weaving them into authentic growth narratives, and ensuring PTG frameworks honor the complete range of human responses to trauma rather than enforcing superficial optimism.

Lunch on your own 12:00-1:30

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Appreciation For Life - Reframe trauma: From PTSD to PTG

Jason Webb, MSW, LCSW

CEU = 1

The focus will be on shifting from a victim mentality to a survivor mindset. Application of PTG in practice helping students find hope and a mission or cause going forward.

Summary: University of Utah graduate, Mr. Webb will challenge the prevailing focus on PTSD and advocate for a PTG-centered approach. He will discuss strategies for reframing trauma narratives and empowering clients through a PTG lens. Mr. Webb will explain the role of the Reticular Activating System and how it plays in perception. He will focus on the following: reframing trauma, the power of perspective personal stories, the role of gratitude, journaling as a tool for growth, cultivating optimism and establishing boundaries.

At the conclusion of this presentation participants will be able to:

1. Evaluate research to analyze the prevailing focus on PTSD and advocacy for a PTG-centered approach.
2. Identify the role of the Reticular Activating System and how it plays in perception in reframing trauma narratives.
3. Recognize the power of perspective personal stories; the role of gratitude, journaling as a tool for growth, cultivating optimism and establishing boundaries.

2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Words Matter

CEU = 1

Benée Larsen, Suicide Prevention Director NAMI

Messaging Matters is a community-focused education program that builds capacity for safe, effective, and prevention-oriented communication about suicide. The program teaches participants how words, images, data, and stories can either increase risk or promote hope, help-seeking, and recovery. The program equips community members, media partners, public health

practitioners, and organizations with practical tools to communicate about suicide responsibly—across media reporting, data sharing, social media, and lived-experience storytelling. The ultimate goal is to create a culture of communication that reduces harm, reduces stigma, and strengthens community prevention efforts.

Objectives:

1. **Enhance adherence to evidence-based safe messaging standards.**
Increase participants' knowledge and application of nationally recognized safe messaging guidelines, including the identification and avoidance of harmful practices such as sensationalism, method details, oversimplification of causes, and stigmatizing language.
2. **Improve responsible use of stories and data in suicide prevention.**
Build participant capacity to frame lived-experience narratives and epidemiological data in ways that prioritize solutions, highlight protective factors, encourage help-seeking, and avoid normalization or contagion effects.
3. **Strengthen organizational and community accountability for safe communication.**
Support participating organizations in adopting internal review practices (a “safety lens”) for public-facing materials, responding constructively to unsafe media coverage, and disseminating safe messaging principles within their networks.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Suicide Prevention

CEU = 1 Suicide Prevention

Laura Bradbury, LCSW, PhD, Assistant Professor U of U Nursing

4:30 – 5:00 p.m. Summary for first day

5:30 End Day One

1. Understand the value of postvention models and explain how grief support postvention efforts can disrupt cycles of suicide risk
2. Apply principles of grief literacy to create environments that support meaning-making and post traumatic growth
3. Understand the relationship between social connection, community care and post traumatic growth in suicide prevention

Day Two Next Page.

Day Two June 18, 2026

8:30-9:00 a.m. Conference Starts Welcome

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Sustaining Helper Growth CEU = 1

Integration Dr. David B. England II, PsyD., MS, PCC Performance &

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Summary: This presentation outline provides evidence-based data and strategies for mental health providers, structured around three core pillars: **Individual Resilience & Psychological Growth, Boundary Management, and Organizational Advocacy.**

Point 1: Cultivating Personal Resilience & Psychological Growth

Mindfulness and psychological growth are not just buzzwords; they are also clinical interventions for providers. Evidence shows that daily mindfulness and cognitive restructuring reduce stress hormones, increase "compassion satisfaction," and restructure neural networks that reinforce the pleasure derived from helping others.

Point 2: Establishing Ethical & Professional Boundaries

Boundaries are the first line of defense against compassion fatigue. Research indicates that providers with "role ambiguity" and an inability to separate work from personal life are at the highest risk.

Point 3: Leveraging Supervision and Peer Support

Social support is the strongest protective factor against secondary traumatic stress. Isolation is a primary predictor of professional dropout.

10:00-11:00 a.m. Spiritual and Existential Change with Post Traumatic Growth **CEU = 1**

Steffanie Anderson, MBA

Three Objectives for Trauma and the Subtle Body:

1. To lay out a basic understanding of the five layers of the subtle body according to Yogic Philosophy.
2. To teach how stimulus touches each of the subtle layers in order.
3. To help people understand which layer the trauma is getting trapped in and what to do to process through it.

11:00 – 12:00 a.m. The Role of Relationships in Post Traumatic Growth **CEU = 1**

Betsy Kanarowski, PhD, LCSW Chief Clinical Officer at Saprea

Summary: Using examples from her work with survivors of child sexual abuse, Dr. Kanarowski will explore the key functions of relationships and community in healing and post traumatic growth processes.

At the conclusion of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of utilizing a relational/systemic lens in supporting post traumatic growth.
2. Identify the role of “expert companions” and differentiate the types of individuals that can act in a relational capacity to provide support and help navigate challenges.
3. Recognize interpersonal growth outcomes.

Lunch on your own 12:00-1:30

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Suicide Prevention

CEU = 1 **Suicide Prevention**

Edwin, E. Nyambi, PA-C, DMSc, MPAs

1. Describe how Suicide may result from disturbances in one or more of these interrelated factors:
 - #. Biological function
 - #. Learned behavior
 - #. Psychodynamic maladaptation
 - #. Social and environmental conditions
 - #. Ruling out medical conditions
2. Identify modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors for suicide.
3. List the key concepts of suicide prevention.
4. Use of medications, therapy, support systems, warning signs, prevention

2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Finding Personal Strength after Trauma CEU = 1

The Honorable Paul M. Warner, J.D., M.P.A. Retired U.S. Magistrate Judge, Colonel, Army National Guard Judge Advocate General (Retired)

1. **Define and recognize the five domains of post-traumatic growth** and identify how trauma can become a catalyst for renewed personal strength, using real-world examples drawn from military service, courtroom cases, and civilian life.
2. **Analyze compelling stories of resilience** shared by the speaker—individuals who transformed profound trauma into a clear new mission or life purpose—and extract practical lessons on rebuilding identity and direction after crisis.
3. **Apply key PTG principles to their own lives** by reflecting on personal or observed trauma experiences and identifying at least one actionable step toward discovering renewed purpose and inner strength moving forward.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Finding Hope After Trauma with Post Traumatic Growth

Speaker Hugh Watt, MSW, LCSW CEU = 1

1. This session will provide an integrative overview of the core domains of post-traumatic growth, illustrating how these positive psychological changes—enhanced relationships, discovery of new life possibilities, increased personal strength, greater appreciation of life, and transformed existential or spiritual perspectives—were reflected across the diverse experiences shared by earlier conference presenters.

2. Participants will explore the essential role of expert companionship as a supportive, non-directive relational approach that facilitates hope and growth following trauma, emphasizing attentive listening, thoughtful connection to community resources and peers, sustained presence during the healing process, and empowerment of the individual's own capacity for positive transformation.

3. The presentation will conclude by highlighting practical implications for professionals and attendees, demonstrating how adopting elements of expert companionship in their work and interactions can help create environments that support and amplify post-traumatic growth for those they serve, while also contributing to personal and collective resilience.

4:30 – 5:00 p.m. Certificates Feedback

5:30 End Day Two. See you Next June!