

*Maybe I  
 Should Talk  
 With Someone?*

**In all of our lives, there are moments when we need someone else's perspective to help us see clearly.** Here are 5 tips that will help you to decide if it's time to talk with a mental health provider:

*Are your thoughts or feelings causing significant distress in your everyday life?* If you're struggling to function at work, home, or school for several weeks in a row - it's time.

*Have you tried what you can think of to improve things, but nothing has helped much?* If your coping skills aren't working as well as they used to (or at all) - it's time.

*Are your problems overwhelming family and friends?* Friends and family can be a lot of help when times are hard, but if they're pulling away because they can't help you in the way you need - it's time.

*Are you overusing or abusing something (or someone) to try to help yourself feel better?* Alcohol, drugs, nicotine, Netflix, the internet, porn, lashing out at others... They can all be distracting. If you're hurting yourself or others - it's time.

*Has someone that you trust to be kind and honest noticed that you're struggling and mentioned that it might be a good idea to talk to someone?* **It's time.**

# Positive Psychology

*The study of what makes life worth living.*

In the same way that humanity's growing understanding of how our bodies work has eased physical suffering, learning more about how our minds work has alleviated mental suffering. Positive Psychology focuses on ways that people and communities can move beyond simply no longer suffering and move into flourishing and experiencing well-being. Instead of focusing on our weakness, Positive Psychology concentrates on learning more about our strengths. It's about then using those strengths to support what's working well, instead of just repairing what's not working.



**Individuals with higher levels of well-being:**

- Have less depression and anxiety and fewer sleep problems.
- Have better physical health, stronger immune systems, and quicker recovery times.

- Perform better at school, work, and sports.
- Have more satisfying relationships, greater self-control, and are more cooperative.

**Institutions such as schools, worksites, and communities help people flourish by:**

- Offering opportunities for people to learn and practice skills of resilience.
- Ensuring that people have access to adequate mental health services to both heal mental illness and enhance mental well-being.
- Include measures of well-being when developing public policy. Economic indicators are not the only measure of a community's well-being. "We measure what we value, and we value what we measure."

**If you'd like to know more about positive psychology, visit:**

The Positive Psychology Center (<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>)

Positive Psychology Program (<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/>)

**What does it mean to for a person to flourish?** There are 5 building-blocks of wellbeing:

- **Positive Emotion** - feeling better about our past, our present, and our future.
- **Engagement** - feeling "flow," or being so absorbed in a challenging, enjoyable task that the activity becomes its own reward.
- **Relationships** - feeling connected with other people and both giving and receiving support.
- **Meaning** - feeling a sense of purpose and of serving something more important than yourself.
- **Accomplishment** - feeling competent and masterful at doing something.

**What are some of the benefits of Positive Psychology?** Positive Psychology can benefit individuals, institutions, and even public policy. There are larger advantages to us all beyond simply feeling better.

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We're here to help! Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.

# Post-Traumatic Growth

**C**hances are, you've heard of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), a condition that is triggered by experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event. Symptoms of PTSD can include severe anxiety, flashbacks, nightmares, and uncontrollable thinking about what happened.

However, you may not yet have heard about Post-Traumatic Growth. This happens when someone not only survives harrowing events but then finds ways to thrive afterward. Experiencing growth after trauma can even happen at the same time someone is experiencing PTSD. The key to this growth is resilience.

Resilience isn't something you're just born with. It's the result of thoughts and behaviors that can be learned. In fact, since 2009, the U.S. Army has offered a 10-day course called "Master Resilience Training" to its officers. The goal is that not only will these soldiers themselves become more resilient, but that they'll be able to teach these skills to others.

**Whether you are in the Army or not, there are 6 steps that you can use to build your skills of resilience.**

- 1. Seek out the good.** Just like you can shop in the grocery store and find food that will make you stronger and food that will make you weaker, you can look for and find both helpful and hurtful aspects in most situations. You can learn how to make the choice to focus your attention and energy on:
  - The positive pieces of situations.
  - The components of that situation that you can control. This helps to develop the habit of optimism and energizes positive change.
- 2. Become mentally flexible.** This enables you to assess situations more completely and accurately. It also helps you to avoid "thinking traps" that cause you to see only part of what's really going on. Two of the more common thinking traps are:
  - The "me-me-me" trap in which you tend to always blame yourself for unwanted outcomes.
  - The "them-them-them" trap, in which you tend to blame others when things go wrong.
- 3. Pay attention to your thoughts.** This increases your self-awareness and helps you to understand your habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. You can then start to recognize patterns and consciously choose to keep the patterns that help you or change the ones that harm you. A good place to start is by keeping a log or journal of what you're thinking and believing during stressful times.
- 4. Learn how to put your thoughts into "reverse."** Once you're able to identify counter-productive thoughts and beliefs, you can then learn how to put your thought process into reverse. This enables you to back out of catastrophic thinking and

forward into purposeful action. One way to do this is to get a piece of paper and divide it into three columns. In the "Worst-case scenario" column, write down all the possible terrible outcomes. In the "Best-case scenario" column, put all the utterly unlikely wonderful outcomes. Lastly, in the "Most-likely scenario" column, put all the outcomes that are most likely to actually happen. Now you have a more accurate assessment of what's in front of you, and you can plan effective next steps.

- 5. Focus on your strengths.** You have them; you just might not have thought about them in a while. Are you brave? Do you have a good sense of humor? Do you give and receive love easily? Intentionally look for ways to call those strengths into use for the challenge that's at hand.
- 6. Grow stronger connections.** Resilience is not about "flying solo." A big part of it is building strong connections with other people so that you can both ask for (and accept) help when you need it. It also gives you someone with whom to share the good news when things go right!

*"The majority of people... grow as a result of their suffering. Paradoxically, many grow even as they suffer. The way we cope with trauma is far more complex than once thought, and the way it molds us is similarly complex. We bend, we break, we repair and rebuild, and often we grow, changing for the better in ways we never would have if we had not suffered."*

- Jim Rendon

## Resources

To learn more about PTSD, go to <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>

To read the story of an Army sergeant that survived and thrived after an IED attack while serving in Iraq, visit [https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/magazine/post-traumatic-stress-surprisingly-positive-flip-side.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/magazine/post-traumatic-stress-surprisingly-positive-flip-side.html?_r=1)

To identify your strengths, take the "Values in Action" quiz at <https://www.authenticchappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter> It's detailed (240 questions about whether statements are like you or not), and it gives you your top five strengths. Now you can look for ways to use them more often!

For more information on resiliency and the six components of the Army's Master Resilience Training course, go to [http://www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/08/24/thrive.in.hard.times.enayati/index.html?hpt=hp\\_c2](http://www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/08/24/thrive.in.hard.times.enayati/index.html?hpt=hp_c2)

And remember, Sawtooth Mountain Clinic's Behavioral Health Consultants are here to help. Call 218-387-2330 to make an appointment.