



# GROW

Post-traumatic growth



peoplecare.GLOBAL

# GROW

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# GROW

## INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

GROW is an educational program designed to help people grow through critical incidents (e.g. tragedy, betrayal, injury, civil conflict, bankruptcy, natural disaster, exploitation). Specifically, this program aims to equip and empower participants in five key areas: (a) mental; (b) emotional; (c) behavioural; (d) relational; and (e) spiritual wellbeing.

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## PROGRAM DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES

- The GROW program endeavours to help people who have survived critical incidence and tragic circumstances better understand their experience, and be directly equipped with the knowledge, skills and courage to GROW through their personal challenges.
- The GROW program is based on scientific research into post traumatic growth and founded on ethical constructs. Thousands of people from war affected communities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East have graduated from this program. This program has been validated through empirical studies with results being published in international scientific literature.
- This program is suitable for personal (e.g., individuals, couples, or family in a home setting) or corporate (e.g., organisations, rehabilitation and community centres, churches, schools and private clinics) engagement.
- The GROW program is designed to be easy to follow and is written in a way that can be understood by people of diverse generations, cultures and educational backgrounds.
- The GROW program consists of seven sessions, each of which aims to 'cultivate' key character-strengths and core competencies for overall health and wellbeing. Program components build upon one another, necessitating each session to be completed in sequential order.
- The GROW program is an educational program designed to equip participants with new life- skills, qualities and characteristics which promote mental and emotional resiliency, and in turn enable participants to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. While for some participants the GROW program may be therapeutic (effective in bringing about personal recovery and sustainable change), the GROW program is not counselling or therapy.

# GROW

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## GETTING STARTED

Research suggests that learning is best consolidated through ‘talking’. As such, you may wish to complete this program with a trusted friend or family member, or in a more formal small group setting. Start each session by watching the relevant online video. Feel free to pause the video at any time, to reflect on or discuss key points. Activity worksheets provide a summary of key points and serve to reinforce lessons on cultivating personal growth.

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## DISCLAIMER

All assessments, activities and information presented in the GROW program are intended for educational purposes only. Content is provided in good faith as to its accuracy and reflects the research, observations, opinions, views and understanding of the authors at one point in time. At no point should this information be taken diagnostically or as clinical therapy. For clinical advice, please consult your medical or mental health professional. Any reference to spirituality or faith in a ‘Divinity’ is done so without prejudice. No unfavourable opinions about any person’s religious belief or practices are conveyed in this program. All faith-based concepts included in this program have been validated by scientific research and published in peer reviewed international scientific journals.



**NOTE: PROFESSIONAL CARE:** If at any time during the course of this educational program you feel emotionally overwhelmed or concerned about your psychological health, seek immediate assistance from a qualified mental health or medical professional.

# Sowing and Growing

## ACTIVITY SHEET



People face all sorts of challenges in their lives. Some are obviously more difficult than others. When a person is knocked down by a critical incident or tragedy, some individuals manage to pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and get back on with their life. Others, however, take a longer time to recover from their setback. Some people never recover at all. However, research has now shown there's a way people can also GROW through tragic circumstances – ending up more resilient than before tragedy struck (making true of that age old saying ‘that which doesn't kill, makes you stronger’).



### PROGRAM DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

**The GROW program is designed to help you:**

- (a)** effectively deal with setbacks, personal difficulties and/or tragic circumstances
- (b)** develop the character-strengths to facilitate growth
- (b)** improve five interconnected areas of your life: (a) mental; (b) emotional; (c) behavioural; (d) relational; and (e) spiritual wellbeing

# General Introduction

The goal of this program is to not only teach you how to recover from negative life events, but also equip you with the knowledge, skills and courage to GROW through the personal challenges that you may currently be facing.

## **People who grow through tragic circumstances may experience the following:**

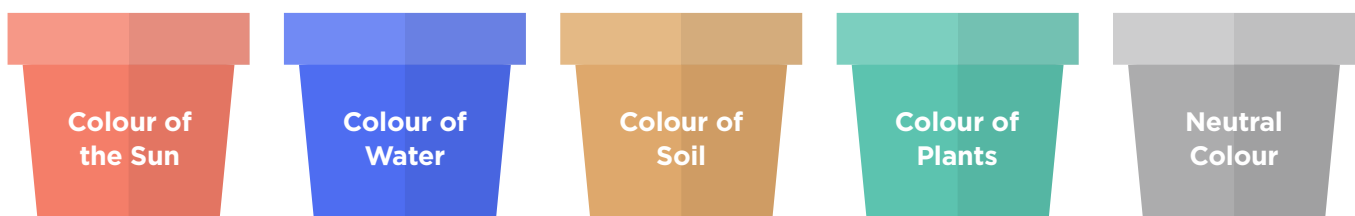
- Increased peace and happiness
- Positive relationships with others
- Greater compassion and care
- Renewed physical energy, health and strength
- Creative and strategic thinking
- Greater autonomy, responsibility and wisdom
- More appreciation and gratitude for life
- Self-acceptance and increased inner strength
- A sense of mastery and purpose in life
- Productive contribution to family, community or society
- Relationship with God reconciled or renewed
- Re-establish a new beginning (i.e. home, career or relationship)

# Foundations for Growth

The word 'GROW' is a term often used by farmers and gardeners to describe the process in between sowing and harvesting. However, no farmer or gardener can actually 'grow' anything. All they can do is create the right environment and conditions for growth to take place. Growing is miraculous. We can observe growth, we can explain growth, we can facilitate growth and we can even experience growth, but we cannot 'do' growth. However, given the right conditions and environment, growth is not just possible, it's inevitable.

## THE EXPERIMENT:

A gardener wanted to grow a plant in a pot but was unsure what was the best pot colour to enable growth. So, the gardener selected five different coloured pots and conducted an experiment to see which colour would yield the greatest growth.



**GROWTH DOESN'T HAPPEN BY CHANCE. GIVEN THE RIGHT CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENT (E.G. HEALTHY SEED, FERTILE SOIL, SUNSHINE AND WATER), GROWTH IS GUARANTEED.**

The gardener filled each coloured pot with fertile soil and then planted a healthy seed into each one. All pots were given sufficient water and were then placed in the sun. To the gardener's surprise, all coloured pots ended up having equally healthy growing plants in them, regardless of colour.



Just like the myth that planting a seed in different coloured pots will yield different outcomes, some people mistakenly think that they cannot grow as much as others if they: are too old or uneducated, have a 'different' skin colour, are considered to be of a 'less privileged' gender or ethnicity, were born into the wrong family or tribe, or belong to a disadvantaged or persecuted minority group.

**Q:** Why is this not actually true?

# Personal Growth

Personal growth is not reserved for the lucky few; it is available for everyone to cultivate. Given the right internal conditions (an open heart [fertile soil], a positive mind [sunshine], a willingness to learn [water] and a spiritual core set of values and ethics [nutrients], research has demonstrated that EVERY PERSON can reap a harvest of happiness and wellbeing (even those who have survived the worst of tragedies or who have been affected by tragic circumstances).

When a person is gifted with a bag of seed, there are a number of things they can do with it. They can (a) eat it; (b) store it; or (c) sell it. But none of these options will produce a harvest. For growth to take place, the seed needs to be sown – and that requires strategic planning, preparation and effort. Before seeds can be planted in the ground, there are four important questions that need to be asked:

## 01.

### WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GROW? = OBJECTIVE

If you are to reap a harvest in your life, what kind of fruit would you like to grow? What kind of produce would you like to harvest? What kind of strengths and qualities would you like to develop? In summary, how would you like to improve your life?

**Q:** What would you ultimately like to achieve by completing the GROW program?

## 02.

### WHAT'S THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR SOIL? = EVALUATION

If your internal soil is too dry, too wet, too acidic, or lacking in nutrients, you may need to first make some modifications and enhance the quality of soil. By doing this, you increase your chances of successfully reaping a harvest. The only way to know what needs to change is to conduct an evaluation.

## 03.

### HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR SOIL? = IMPROVEMENT

Once an evaluation of our soil's strengths and weaknesses has been conducted, we need to carefully consider what changes are needed to improve the quality of the soil.

## 04.

### ARE YOU WILLING TO INVEST THE TIME AND ENERGY REQUIRED TO REAP A HARVEST IN YOUR LIFE? = MOTIVATION

Are you willing to make the personal changes required to be successful? Are you humble enough to develop new character-strengths and learn new skills? Are you ready for change?



**Even though  
growth is  
available to all,  
not everyone  
is willing to  
pay the price.**



# Personal Evaluation

Strategic evaluation helps inform the gardener what modifications need to be made to ensure success. There are four easy ways to check the state of a garden and the quality of its soil:



**Check what's already growing: plants, weeds or nothing?**

What's growing in your life? (e.g., Joy, resentment, or numbness)



**Check the health and strength of your existing plants.**

What's the status of your personal wellbeing and relationships?



**Check variables that affect soil quality (water, sunshine, nutrients).**

Are your choices and current conduct helping or hurting you?



**Check environmental threats (thorns, erosion, animals)**

Are healthy social boundaries in place to safeguard personal wellbeing?

**THE QUALITY OF THE SOIL WILL ULTIMATELY DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF THE HARVEST.**



# Personal Evaluation

To increase a gardener's chance of reaping an abundant harvest, they have to evaluate and then improve the quality of the soil in which they will sow seed. In the same way, before sowing seed in your life to facilitate growth, you first need to evaluate the fertility of your own mental, emotional, behavioural, relational and spiritual soil within. With a snapshot of how well you're functioning in the various aspects of your life, you can make motivational modifications to enhance your personal growth.

## MENTAL

The following statements describe your mind's way of thinking. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Positive thinking	or	Negative thinking
Problem solving	or	Problem focused
Clear thoughts	or	Confused thoughts
Creative ideas	or	Dull & boring ideas
Looking forward (planning the future)	or	Looking back (remembering the past)

## EMOTIONAL

The following statements describe your heart's way of feeling. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Hopeful & optimistic	or	Hopeless & pessimistic
Feeling happy	or	Feeling sad
Courage & bravery	or	Fear & worry
Like myself	or	Dislike myself
Calm & content	or	Frustrated & angry

## BEHAVIOURAL

The following statements describe your personal actions. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Productive	or	Unproductive
Peaceful (getting along)	or	Aggressive (getting into arguments)
Patient	or	Impatient
Friendly & socially engaging	or	Unfriendly & socially withdrawn
Taking responsibility	or	Avoiding responsibility

## RELATIONAL

The following statements describe your conduct towards others. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Helpful toward others	or	Unhelpful towards others
Concerned about others	or	Concerned about myself
Kind towards others	or	Unkind towards others
Caring & intimate towards loved ones	or	Cold & distant towards loved ones
Encouraging of others	or	Critical of others

## SPIRITUAL

The following statements describe your belief in and about a Divine Creator or God. If you don't believe in the existence of God, ignore these descriptions and score yourself five points for this section. However, if you do hold on to a faith and you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

My Divine Creator is blessing me	or	My Divine Creator is not blessing me
Devoted to my Divine Creator	or	Confused about my Divine Creator
My Divine Creator is pleased with me	or	My Divine Creator is disappointed with me
Thankful for so many things	or	Finding it difficult to be thankful
Believing my Divine Creator loves & cares for me	or	Believing my Divine Creator may have abandoned me

## SCORING

Allocate yourself a score of '0' for any selection you made in the left column (positive) and allocate a score of '1' for any selection you made in the right column (negative). Add up all your 1's and record the scores below. At the conclusion of this program, a follow up evaluation of your mental, emotional, behavioural, relational and spiritual wellbeing will be conducted to see how the state of your garden has changed.

MENTAL	=	/5
EMOTIONAL	=	/5
BEHAVIOURAL	=	/5
RELATIONAL	=	/5
SPIRITUAL	=	/5
TOTAL SCORE	=	/25



**NOTE: BE ENCOURAGED** A lower score indicates healthier soil within. Yet, regardless of the score (high or low), be encouraged. This is just the starting point. When embarking upon any journey, the starting point is just as important as the destination. If we don't know where we are, we won't have anything to measure our progress against. Even if you scored 25 out of 25, rather than being discouraged, the good news, your soil has the greatest room for improvement. This is a great starting point because things can **ONLY GET BETTER!**

# Strengths and Weaknesses

Everyone has strengths in their life they can capitalise on, and weaknesses they can improve upon. The key is being (a) humble enough to recognise you have both, and (b) wise enough to identify and use them to your advantage.



**Q:** In what areas of your life are you functioning well? (what aspects of your mental, emotional, behavioural, relational or spiritual life are you doing well in)

**Q:** What areas of your life need improving? (what aspects of your mental, emotional, behavioural, relational or spiritual life are you not doing well in)

**Q:** Can you identify any hazards in your life that may inhibit your growth? (e.g., toxic beliefs, poor habits, discouraging people, ongoing health and safety issues)

**CHALLENGES  
NOT ONLY  
HIGHLIGHT AREAS  
OF POTENTIAL  
WEAKNESS, BUT  
REVEAL AREAS  
OF PERSONAL  
STRENGTHS.**

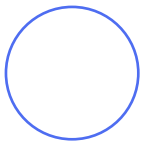


# Readiness for Change

Many people want to take back control over their lives and make a change for good; however, they are simply not ready to do so. Others deny that any improvements are required in their life at all. Yet, there are some who recognise the need for change, and are ready to do whatever it takes. These are the people who go from tragedy to triumph. There are different stages on the journey towards sustainable change. Facilitate a group discussion on what advice could be given to anyone stuck in a particular stage (identifying resolutions to help them move forward).

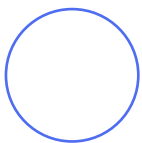


Which stage of 'readiness-for-change' statement do you most identify with? ✓



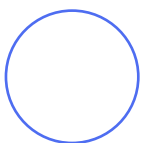
## 01. RESISTING CHANGE

"I am not the one who needs changing. It is everyone else that needs changing. I don't see what the point is in me making improvements in my life when no one else is going to change. Nothing has helped in the past, so why would I expect that anything will help now. Besides, I have survived up until now. I am fine the way I am."



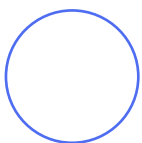
## 02. WANTING CHANGE

"I genuinely want my situation to change. I want my life to improve, but I feel stuck. I realise that I have major challenges in my life, but I don't know how to resolve them. I don't even know if I have the courage. In fact, I don't even understand how I got into this situation in the first place. I just wish I could go to sleep and wake up in the morning with a new life. I know I need to do something, but I'm not sure if change is actually possible."



## 03. ABOUT TO CHANGE

"Okay, I'm ready to do something about my situation (at least, I think I am)! I will throw everything I've got into this GROW program and apply all the lessons I learn. But first, I need to get myself organised, sorted and ready. Preparations starts now."



## 04. ENGAGING CHANGE

"I am committed to the process of change and I'm already feeling good about participating in the GROW program. My journey towards transformation has already begun."



**Q:** What advice would you give someone who is 'Resisting Change'?

**Example:** All this talk of change must be quite confronting for you, but there must be a part of you that wonders if change might just be possible.

**Q:** What advice would you give someone who is 'Wanting Change'?

**Example:** Weigh up the benefits of change (growth) versus doing nothing (no growth). Consider taking the first step and see what happens.

**Q:** What advice would you give someone who is 'About to Change'?

**Example:** Take your first step and you will already be on your way towards sustainable growth. Change starts today. Don't put it off any longer.

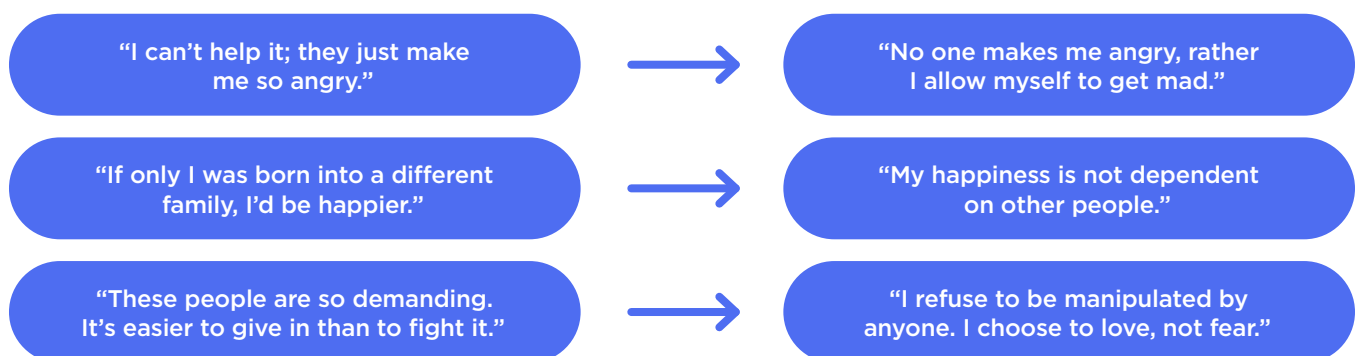
**Q:** What advice would you give someone who is 'Engaging Change'?

**Example:** Stay focused. There are many challenges to overcome on this journey, but keep watering, weeding, and waiting. The investment is worth it.

# The First Step

The moment you start to believe external people, events or circumstances are responsible for your own personal wellbeing, you fall into a trap. How you feel and function will be controlled by others. They become your master, and you become their slave. Yet people who go 'from tragedy to triumph' take the necessary 'first step' towards wrestling back responsibility. As soon as they catch themselves making excuses or blaming others, they arrest the thought and replace it with a healthy alternative.

**This is what stepping away from 'Blame and Excuse' and toward 'Responsibility' looks like:**



**Reframe the following 'Blame and Excuse' based thoughts and take 'Responsibility.'**

"I realise other people may be able to GROW through their tragic circumstances, but they haven't experienced what I have experienced."

"If I had money and freedom like those other people, then I would be happy too. But because of my situation, there's little hope anything will change!"





What first step might you need to take in order to move from ‘Excuse and Blame’ and toward ‘Responsibility’? Complete the following statement:

“From this point forward, I believe I am responsible for..”