

Title: Rethinking Recovery: Posttraumatic Growth Through Eating Disorder Recovery

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Abstract: The eating disorder (ED) treatment and research communities are plagued by hopelessness due to poor prognoses and treatment outcomes. Additionally challenging is the lack of consensus on defining recovery from EDs. However, a growing movement—the Recovery Movement—seeks to re-conceptualize ED recovery, empower patients, and inspire hope. One possible contribution to this movement is application of a Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) framework, which has been used to examine transformative, psychological growth resulting from overcoming adversity. PTG has only recently been explored in recovery from mental illness and has not yet been applied to ED recovery. The present study sought to pioneer the application PTG to ED recovery while simultaneously investigating definitions of recovery using qualitative interviews with female ED survivors (N=10). Qualitative analysis revealed three categories describing the experience of ED recovery and growth: New Relationship to the Self, New View of Life, and Interpersonal Growth. The overall thematic structure aligns with and extends traditional conceptions of PTG and offers hope for the promise of recovery. Further investigations of growth using recovered voices could strengthen treatment and research while clarifying the definition of ED recovery, empowering survivors, and inspiring patients.

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