The 8IATC received funding from the Australian Government.
“Thinking outside the clinic: The impact of an Adventure Therapy intervention in the promotion of posttraumatic growth”

Matthew Slavin
29th August 2018
Welcome!

"Thinking outside the clinic: The impact of an Adventure Therapy programme in the promotion of post-traumatic growth"

Matthew Slavin (MSC), Dr. Leanne Andrews, Dr. Jo Barton
University of Essex
Trend over time

0-24 YEARS

Age group with greatest increase in incidence rates since the early 1990s, UK

+33%

Change in young people’s cancer incidence rates since the early 1990s, UK

Highest

15-40 YEARS

Age that cancer survival is generally highest

Improvement

24% - 50%

Cancer survival in the UK has doubled in the last 40 years
• Increasing survival rates for youth diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer and renal disease.

• More children and young people now live with chronic health conditions, rather than die from them (Bacci & Lari, 2001; Balen, Fielding, & Lewis, 1998; Soliday, Kool, & Lande, 2000).
Psychosocial Development for Young People

- Identity Development (Values, Sex, Gender, Occupation, Culture, Politics)
- Rebellion
- Peers > Parents
- Romantic Relationships
- Risk-Taking
"Adolescent & Young Adult Paradox" Kent et al. (2012)

- Individuals that are unwell are dependent on others at a time when developmentally normative processes foster independence and autonomy (Kent et al. 2012)

- Premature confrontation with death (Freyer, 2004)

- Social isolation from important peer relationships (Al Omari & Wynaden, 2014)
  - repeated hospitalization, fears of disclosure, and time spent away from social settings (Park, Bharadwaj, & Blank, 2011; Stevens et al., 2004).

- Conformity & Risk-Aversion
The stress of facing a life-threatening illness for many children and young people is experienced as a significant trauma (Hobbs & Sexson, 1993).

Psychosocial challenges:

- self esteem
- identity development (Evan, Kaufman, Cook, & Zeltzer, 2006)
- social anxiety
- isolation (Abrams, Hazen, & Penson, 2007),
- negative self-concept (Hokkanen, Eriksson, Outi, & Sanna, 2004)
- elevated risk for self-harm, and attempted suicide (Barnes, Eisenberg, & Resnick, 2010).
More than 50 per cent (n = 879) of young adult survivors of cancer indicate that their needs for support services have been unmet.

Research suggests a need to enhance provision of supportive care for young adult cancer survivors throughout a continuum of care from diagnosis to off-treatment survivorship (Zebrack, 2009)
Psychosocial Development for Young People

- Identity Development (Values, Sex, Gender, Occupation, Culture, Politics)
- Rebellion
- Peers > Parents
- Romantic Relationships
- Risk-Taking
“Thinking outside the clinic: The impact of an Adventure Therapy intervention in the promotion of posttraumatic growth”

Matthew Slavin
29th August 2018
"Exploring the Psychosocial Impacts of an Adventure Programme for Young Adult Survivors of Cancer"

Matthew Slavin & Dr. Eva Murzyn

University of Glasgow
Method

Participants (n = 6, mean age = 21.8 years) completed semi-structured interviews several years (3-4) after intervention.

A six-step thematic analysis was used to identify major themes and explore their relation to current psychological theory.
Results

- Fostering Hope
- The Supportive Group
- Awareness & Acceptance
- Changes to Self-Concept
- Cultivating Self-efficacy

8th International Adventure Therapy Conference
Sydney, Australia 2018
“Fostering Hope”

“I thought I was in a bad way physically but there were other people there that were a hell of a lot worse off than me and done just as well, if not better than what I did physically during [the intervention]. It just gave me a lot of hope... that I would and could still do a lot of physical activity, even though it's not what I'm used to doing” – Elizabeth

“I don't know where I'd be if I didn't go on that trip. I didn't let my mum know but... this only gets worse. My legs only get worse, my eyes only get worse, it's only gonna get worse. So, if it's not getting any better, what's the point in living... I think [the intervention], saved my life... I don't know if I'd be brave enough to take my own life but I certainly felt, like, at the time that I was questioning whether life was worth living and [the intervention] definitely gave me some positives to all the negatives in my head... So, yeah I wrote here that if you want to know what impact it makes, it potentially is life-saving is what I would say’ – Francesca
"Changes to Self-Concept"

"I hadn't lost my sense of humour but...there was something missing it's...hard to explain. I think it was a spark that had gone and I think I had lost my way. It was like I had survived and then it was like oh, what's next?" - Daniel

“It showed I could actually hurt myself and I'm not going to break...now all of a sudden I had blood coming out of me, and climbing a mountain and being covered in dirt. So, that was definitely a challenge to switch off from that mind frame and live like a normal person and get a bit rough... Well maybe, I'm back to normal now' and if it wasn't for that I would probably would still be kind of cautious of what I do but that kind of chucked me right in at the deep end, rather than you know, test it little by little. It was like the biggest kind of shock to get out of that mind frame that I was in.” – Jack
"Cultivating Self-Efficacy"

“Just thinking about things differently. Thinking ‘OK, you can’t do that but you can do this’. Basically, what I tell myself is ‘You bump into a couple of things, but you’d done a sixty-foot abseil. So are you really that incapable? Are you really that disabled? No... I’m not.” – Francesca

"I definitely learned that I'm a hell of a lot stronger than I thought I was, even though half the time I would never admit that" - Elizabeth

"A few weeks after you've finished and you think 'wow, I really did that you know'. The whole week... gives you the confidence to say, 'if I've done that...what can I do in my personal life?'" – Jack
"Awareness & Acceptance"

"I think, just before the trip I'd got quite depressed and down and I didn't really know. It sounds silly but I wasn't aware of how down in the dumps I was... It wasn't until afterwards I was thinking, 'God I was a bit of a mess before this' and I think, that's what I mean by turning point in that it not only helped me to overcome what was going on in my head, it actually helped me realise it was there as well...

So I think the message I'm taking from [the intervention] is for people to actually realise where they are at, sort of mentally, because it's easy to think you're OK when you're not really... 'Cause I think what I was trying to do was, not hide it, but I was trying to sort of move on and leave it all behind but you can't do that, not so soon after. You can't just sweep it under the carpet and I think it [the intervention] sort of helped you deal with it, you know, make it into a... positive thing – Daniel
"The Supportive Group"

Shared Experience:
“Yeah the funny thing is I think people assume that if cancer patients get together that we talk about cancer quite a lot but it never really comes up. So, it’s just, it’s a group of young people you know you can trust and you know you can feel yourself because you’ve been through similar situations” - Jack

Understanding Each Other:
“I went and it was the best decision that I'd made to be honest ... I didn't want people to be judgmental that I was still struggling after so many years of finishing treatment, but it was the complete opposite when I was there. It wasn't like a taboo subject that you couldn't talk about, each other's illnesses or anything like that, everybody spoke quite openly about it but it wasn't made that you had to speak about it though. It was just, kind of, normal. It was just like a group of friends hanging out but you already had that understanding of each other, which was quite nice without having to explain it.” – Claire,
Beyond a model of adjustment, interviews highlighted renewed evaluations of the self, with improvements in personal functioning that participants viewed as surpassing pre-trauma levels.

Beyond a model of resilience, it would appear that involvement in the Adventure Therapy intervention helps not only to foster adjustment and recovery following a major chronic illness but precipitates posttraumatic growth.
Post-Traumatic Growth

A growing body of research recognizes that traumatic life events, such as life-threatening illness, may not be uniformly concerned with negative outcomes, but may instead be viewed as opportunities for growth (Connerty & Knott, 2013; Shand, Cowlishaw, Brooker, Burney, & Ricciardelli, 2015)
What is Post-Traumatic Growth?

Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) asserts the paradoxical hypothesis that highly challenging life events can foster positive psychological change (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2014).

As such, it ‘questions how we conceptualise human suffering and how we meet it as practitioners’ (Joseph, 2014, p. 341).
Benefits of Post-Traumatic Growth

The potential health-related benefits of fostering PTG are vast, such as:

- improved health-management (Luszczynska, Sarkar, & Knoll, 2007),
- improved immuno-competence (Dunigan, Carr, & Steel, 2007),
- greater acceptance and optimism (Harper et al., 2007; Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Consequently there have been calls for research to review innovative intervention modalities that not only recuperate the psychosocial effects of significant illhealth and treatment, but also provide opportunities for growth (Arpawong et al., 2016; Darbyshire, Oster, & Henning, 2006).
Post-Traumatic Growth (Joseph et al., 2012)

Joseph et al. (2012) contend that it is manifested in 6 domains:

- self-acceptance,
- autonomy,
- purpose in life,
- relationships,
- sense of mastery,
- personal growth.
"Thinking outside the clinic: The impact of an Adventure Therapy programme in the promotion of post-traumatic growth"

Matthew Slavin (MSC), Dr. Leanne Andrews, Dr. Jo Barton

University of Essex
Aims & Objectives

This study investigated claims that Adventure Therapy programmes may prove an effective psychosocial intervention for young adult survivors of life-threatening illness and will:

- assess changes in post-traumatic growth,
- as well as potential mechanisms of change
Hypotheses (Quantitative)

1) Participation will foster gains in PTG, Social Connectedness, Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy scores at programme completion.

2) Gains in scores for PTG, Social Connectedness, Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy will be maintained at 3-month and 6-month follow-up.

3) There will be a significant difference in gains in PTG, Social Connectedness, Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy scores between intervention and control groups at follow-up time intervals.

4) Gains in PTG scores for intervention conditions will likely be mediated (explains the relationship) by Social Connectedness or Self-Esteem or Self-Efficacy.
Objectives (Qualitative)

To further understand changes in PTG, qualitative approaches will seek to:

1) Explore participant experiences of involvement in Adventure Therapy Intervention

2) Explore participant views on why they feel the intervention has been help or hindrance to psychosocial rehabilitation
Mixed-Method Longitudinal Design

Quantitative

Intervention Group:
- 4 Questionnaires at:
  - T1 Pre-programme
  - T2 Post-programme - 5 days
  - T3 Follow Up - 3 Months
  - T4 Follow Up - 6 Months

Comparison Group:
- 4 Questionnaires at:
  - T1 Start
  - T2 5 days
  - T3 Follow Up - 3 Months
  - T4 Follow Up - 6 Months

Analysis:
- Paired T-Test(s); Repeated Measures One-Way Anova;
- Two-way repeated measures ANOVA; Regression

Qualitative

2 x Focus Groups

Thematic Analysis
Method: Intervention

- 5-day UK Adventure Therapy Intervention
- Follow-up: Social Club + Refresher Weekends
- Group-based 12-16 people
- Residential trip in AONB in England, Wales, and Scotland
- Adventure activities 2+ a day e.g. Ghyll scrambling, climbing, abseiling, kayaking etc.
- Psychoeducation and Mental Health Workshops
- Reflective sessions
- Outdoor activity instructors + mental health staff + group leader + ambassador seminars from experts by experience e.g. Paralympians, Injured Veterans
Method: Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

- Received a diagnosis of cancer or renal disease during childhood and/or adolescence

- 18-30 years at time of Intervention & Evaluation

- Participants were required to be in ‘partial’ or ‘complete’ remission for cancer, and receiving medical intervention for renal difficulties.
Method: Initial Sample (n = 52)

- Mean Age = 23.64 S.D. = 3.85

- Gender
  - 53.8% = Female
  - 42.3% = Male
  - 3.8% = Transgender Male

- Health-Related Difficulty
  - 78.8% = Cancer
  - 19.2% = Kidney/Renal Difficulties
  - 1.9% = Other

Mean Age of Onset = 17.84, S.D. = 6.37

Ethnicity
- 86.5% = White British, White English, White Scottish or White Welsh
- 5.8% = White other
- 3.8% = Asian British, Asian English, Asian Scottish or Asian Welsh
- 3.8% = Asian other
Mixed-Method Longitudinal Design

Quantitative

Intervention Group:
- 4 Questionnaires at:
  T1 Pre-programme
  T2 Post-programme - 5 days
  T3 Follow Up - 3 Months
  T4 Follow Up - 6 Months

Comparison Group:
- 4 Questionnaires at:
  T1 Start
  T2 5 days
  T3 Follow Up - 3 Months
  T4 Follow Up - 6 Months

Analysis:
- Paired T-Test(s); Repeated Measures One-Way Anova;
  Two-way repeated measures ANOVA; Regression

Qualitative

- 2 x Focus Groups

Thematic Analysis
Preliminary Results
Year 2 of 3
Results: Pre & Post Intervention

![Bar Chart]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measure</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention</th>
<th>Post-Intervention</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>62.65</td>
<td>74.64</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>28.81</td>
<td>36.06</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connectedness</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>19.05</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Traumatic Growth</td>
<td>28.56</td>
<td>32.07</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Post-Traumatic Growth Sub-Tests

PTG (Joseph et al., 2012)
- Sense of Mastery
- Self-acceptance
- Autonomy
- Purpose in Life
- Personal Growth
- Relationships
## Results: Post-Traumatic Growth Sub-Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Test</th>
<th>Mean Change</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Cohen’s $d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Follow-Up

![Graph showing Post-Traumatic Growth over time with scores at pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up points.]

- **PTG Score**
  - Pre-intervention: 61.06
  - Post-intervention: 72*
  - 3 Month Follow-up: 69.88*
  - 6 Month Follow-up: 68.71

**Time**:
- Pre-intervention
- Post-intervention
- 3 Month Follow-up
- 6 Month Follow-up
Results: Follow-Up

![Graph showing social connectedness scores over time](image)
Results: Follow-Up

![Graph showing changes in self-esteem over time.](image-url)
Results: Follow-Up

![Graph showing self-efficacy scores over time](image)

- **Pre-intervention**: 27.82
- **Post-intervention**: 30.82*
- **3 Month Follow-up**: 27.65
- **6 Month Follow-up**: 27.65

*Statistically significant change
Summary

- We need to consider intervention that can help people thrive, not just survive.

- Initial results suggest that an Adventure Therapy Intervention can help precipitate post-traumatic growth.

- This effect is maintained over time (6-months).

- Further results to come!
Final Results

To be disseminated in Autumn 2019

Please let me know if you wish to receive a copy of the results
Questions
Final Results

To be disseminated in Autumn 2019

Please let me know if you wish to receive a copy of the results
Contact Details

Matthew Slavin

www.experiencesofrecovery.com

LinkedIn & Skype: MatthewSlavin1

Email: matthewslavin@hotmail.com
Questions?
References


References


References


Measures:

Assessment of Post-Traumatic Growth: The Psychological Well-Being–Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB-PTCQ; Joseph et al., 2012).


The 8IATC received funding from the Australian Government.