

## PERSONAL GROWTH FROM TRAUMA

By Julie Le Franc, Psychotherapist and Psychologist

*To be traumatized is to be rendered helpless, powerless and/or living in fear of losing one's physical, emotional and spiritual integrity (Grant, 2008).*

Trauma can be defined by sexual assault/rape, war, natural disasters, child abuse, accidents, exploitation and betrayal, life-threatening illness, loss of a partner or child and other traumatic events.

When a person is faced by a trauma and is gripped by overwhelming and debilitating life-events, their whole psychological foundations of self and reality are questioned. Trauma forces us to reconsider our lives, experiences, self, our relationships and God.

Trauma can cause us to engage in disruptive or self-destructive coping mechanisms such as depression, panic attacks, addictions, bodily complaints and lack of control. Trauma can violate our frames of reference and ideas about the world and of human rights and can leave us questioning our conceptions of reality, structures of identity, interpersonal relationships and our relationship with God. We can often think that broken worlds never happen to good people and that broken world experiences can never happen to me and ask "where is God when it hurts?".

Unless a person has worked through a similar life event they are unable to understand the affect of a traumatised individual. By being understood and recreating or revisiting the origin of the trauma under psychologically safe circumstances, allows the traumatised individual to embrace their life experiences, loss and fears and their brokenness.

Accepting that we are vulnerable and surrendering to our assumptions about life allows us to develop a new sense of reality. Recovery and restoration can only happen when we are psychologically and spiritually disassembled and are able to let go of our point of fact about the world, in so doing, we are able to die to the world, to our defences and to our fears.

As a therapist I see many patients with sad stories, hit by traumatic experiences that have left them in pieces, dislodged from familiar frames of reference and reality and left trying to make sense of their world. Having faith through sufferance enables the sufferer to examine the results of their suffering rather than dwell on its cause. Through brokenness some sufferers regress back to their true nature casting themselves upon God and in-turn developing a character of perseverance and inner strength and meaning to their suffering (Yancey, 1990).

### References

(1) Grant, R. (2008). *Growth through adversity: Coming out the other side of trauma, illness and loss*. San Mateo, California.

(2) MacDonald, G. (1988). *Rebuilding your broken world*. East Sussex: Highland Books

(3) Yancey, P. (1990). *Where is God when it hurts?*. Michigan: Zondervan



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