

Post Polio Syndrome and Post Traumatic Growth: From Struggle to Strength

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Post polio syndrome may include new symptoms of fatigue, muscle weakness, muscle and joint pain, sleep disorders, cold intolerance, difficulty swallowing and breathing in polio survivors. These new symptoms and feelings of loss have often resulted in emotional reactions which cause polio survivors to recall their previous physical and emotional challenges as children or adults. This recall of their suffering with the early effects of polio and dealing with being disabled, being different and having the physical limitations in their lives can be traumatic. In addition to these distressing experiences, however, the concept of post traumatic growth, as described by Carla Perry and Mark Chesler (2005) with childhood cancer survivors, sheds light on the gifts that the initial polio and post polio syndrome experience has given many survivors. These gifts, described by Perry and Chesler in cancer survivors, of psychological maturity, greater compassion and empathy, reassessing values and priorities, being stronger people and feeling they can handle whatever life brings, and a deeper appreciation of life are core to living more fully for polio survivors in spite of physical losses.

Parry, Carla and Chesler, Mark. A., Thematic Evidence of Psychosocial Thriving in Childhood Cancer Survivors, Qual. Health Res, 2005, 15, 1055-1073