

# Adversity can be a catalyst for positive change

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Tragedy, natural disasters, terrorism, divorce; 75 per cent of us will experience some form of trauma in life. But the experience can be a catalyst for positive change.

In a ground-breaking new book an expert from The University of Nottingham, who has spent the last twenty years working with the survivors of trauma, challenges the [conventional wisdom](#) about trauma and its aftermath and demonstrates that rather than necessarily ruining one's life, a traumatic event can often improve it.

Professor Stephen Joseph, an expert in posttraumatic growth, says human beings really can find purpose and a new direction in the wake of change and adversity. His book "What Doesn't Kill Us" is published today February 2 2012 by Piatkus

Stephen Joseph, Professor of Psychology, Health and Social Care in the School of Sociology and Social Policy, has worked with survivors and the bereaved families of the Herald of Free Enterprise [tragedy](#) in 1987 and was consulted by the media during the Chilean mining crisis.

## Twenty years of research

His research into 'post-traumatic growth' has shown that bonds with family and friends can become stronger, people become more knowledgeable about themselves, wiser and more compassionate, and

find new perspectives on life.

The book is the culmination of 20 years of research and draws on the wisdom of ancient philosophers, the insights of evolutionary biologists and the optimism of positive psychologists. Professor Joseph's work has shown that a wide range of traumatic events — from illness, [divorce](#), separation, assault, and bereavement to accidents, [natural disasters](#), and terrorism — can act as catalysts for positive change.

## **Harnessing our positive and creative forces**

'What Doesn't Kill Us' reveals how all of us can navigate change and adversity — traumatic or otherwise — to find new meaning, purpose, and direction in life.

Professor Joseph said: “In the struggle to master and make sense of what has happened to us in the aftermath of trauma we can learn to harness the positive and creative forces within us.”

Backed up by scientific evidence, the stories of [survivors](#) are told that show how the destructive effects of trauma can be reversed and how we can put these lessons into practice for ourselves.

Stephen Joseph, a pioneering psychologist, co-directs the Centre for Trauma, Resilience, and Growth. The Centre is a partnership between the Trauma Service situated within Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and the Research Group for the Study of Trauma, Resilience and Growth within The University of Nottingham — this brings together staff from the School of Sociology and Social Policy, School of Education and the Institute for Work, Health and Organisations to form an interdisciplinary partnership dedicated to therapy, education, consultancy and research related to [trauma](#).

In a review of the book Terry Waite CBE said: “We live in a world in which suffering is endemic. In this book Stephen Joseph sounds a hopeful note. Suffering need not destroy.”

More information about the book can be found on Professor Joseph’s Psychology Today blog: [www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-doesnt-kill-us](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-doesnt-kill-us)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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