Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms and Posttraumatic Growth in Children and Adolescents Following an Earthquake

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Posttraumatic stress symptoms—including symptoms such as intrusion, avoidance, negative thoughts and feelings, and hyperarousal—can arise among individuals exposed to natural disasters, yet positive psychological changes, such as posttraumatic growth, can also develop. A Journal of Traumatic Stress analysis looks at these processes in 757 children and adolescents who experienced the 2013 Ya'an earthquake in China.

Three classes of symptoms—resilient, thriving, and struggling—were identified at 8 and 20 months after the earthquake. Of the survivors who were classified as thriving at 8 months, those transitioning to the struggling class at 20 months were more likely to be girls, and they experienced higher levels of loss and injury compared with those transitioning to the resilient class or remaining in the thriving class.

The study's investigators recommend that clinicians consider the classes of posttraumatic stress symptoms and posttraumatic growth, and the potential development paths and the factors that are involved, when implementing interventions for children and adolescents after a natural disaster.

Additional Information


About Journal

Journal of Traumatic Stress (JTS) is published for the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

Journal of Traumatic Stress, the official publication for the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, is an interdisciplinary forum for the publication of peer-reviewed original papers on biopsychosocial aspects of trauma. Papers focus on theoretical formulations, research, treatment, prevention education/training, and legal and policy concerns. Journal of Traumatic Stress serves as a primary reference for professionals who study and treat people exposed to highly stressful and traumatic events (directly or through their occupational roles), such as war, disaster, accident, violence or abuse (criminal or familial), hostage-taking, or life-threatening illness. The journal publishes original articles, brief reports, review papers, commentaries, and, from time to time, special issues devoted to a single topic.

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