

To fully appreciate E.L.I.T.E Teams and the rationale behind the pages in this manual, you must meet Mike Brown.

I first met Mike Brown at a cozy diner in Old Colorado City for an early breakfast. Over bacon and eggs, we casually chatted with our spouses and leisurely discussed the oh-so typical stuff that is normally shared over breakfast. I shared with him my new psychotherapy ventures in private practice, and my specialty in treating severe and persistent mental illnesses. When he described to me the course that he developed for E.L.I.T.E Teams, I could feel the kinetic energy begin to envelope our small table. It wasn't long before our casual breakfast conversation turned into deep discussions on trauma, faith, healing and mental health. As a psychotherapist in private practice, I gleaned as he shared with me his training manual and methods of mentorship, physical training, teamwork building, obstacles, spiritual warfare training, and discipleship training. I could not help but to point out the alignment of his training course with the psychotherapy involved in treating post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses such as anxiety, and depression. More specifically, I was shocked at how Mike's approach to mentorship mirrored the field of psychology's current understanding of a concept called post-traumatic growth (PTG).

Deeply distressing, disturbing, and empowering. This is the definition of the trauma I am passionate about healing alongside my clients. Distressing? Yes. Disturbing? Absolutely. Empowering? Maybe. This definition of trauma is rooted in Post-traumatic Growth (PTG) theory which was developed by Richard Tedeschi, PhD, and Lawrence Calhoun, PhD, in the mid-1990s. PTG is a theory that aims to explain the type of personal transformation which occurs in people who endure psychological struggle following adversity and see growth afterward. PTG is not to be confused with resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back after a difficult experience, and therefore does not always result in PTSD. PTG, on the other hand, refers to what can happen when someone who has difficulty bouncing back experiences a traumatic event that challenges their core beliefs, endures psychological struggle, and then ultimately finds a sense of personal growth. PTG is a process that takes a lot of energy, time and physical/emotional/spiritual hardship.

Who gets to experience post-traumatic growth, and who doesn't? The truth is, we are still trying to figure this out, but research has pointed out a few reoccurring variables experienced by those with PTG. Calhoun and Tedeschi define these variables further. In doing so, they created the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) which consists of five categories listed below. It is my professional opinion that these five categories are reflected not only through the pages of E.L.I.T.E. Mentor Guide, but also embedded in Mike Brown's character and personality. To further illustrate this similarity, I've created the table below:

| Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) | E.L.I.T.E. Mentor Guide |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Appreciation of Life | Obstacle Courses |
| Relationships with Others | Teamwork Building |
| New Possibilities in Life | Discipleship Training |
| Personal Strength | Extreme Physical Training |
| Spiritual Change | Spiritual Warfare Training |

(Journal of Traumatic Stress, 1996)

Observing the similarities above, you can now begin to imagine my excitement at the breakfast table. As Mike and I discussed the overlapping nature of E.L.I.T.E Teams, and my work as a psychotherapist, it became obvious our shared passions for instilling hope in those individuals who feel lost and hopeless, and believing that everyone can experience positive transformation in their lives.

If you are reading this now, you have already begun your journey. Your commitment to this process is crucial as the amount of effort that you put in will determine your outcome. I am confident that following the steps outlined in this manual will lead you to hope and a renewed sense of autonomy, connection and purpose. I wish you the best of luck, and remember, you can do hard things.

Sincerely,

Meghan Begue, LCSW
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Breast Cancer Warrior