



Choosing Wisdom: Strategies and Inspiration for Growing through Life-Changing Difficulties

Margaret Plews-Ogan, Justine Owens, Natalie May

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We all know the saying, “That which does not kill us, makes us stronger,” but is that really true? After all, for some people, traumatic experiences ultimately lead to truly debilitating outcomes. For others though, adversity really does seem to lead to “post-traumatic growth” where individuals move through suffering and find their lives changed in positive ways as a result. Why does this growth happen for some people and not others? How exactly does it happen? Can the positive results be purposefully replicated?

These are the central questions of a new study conducted by a team of researchers at the University of Virginia. They share their findings, along with practical advice and inspiring stories, in their new book *Choosing Wisdom* and the companion PBS documentary of the same name. Based on interviews with two distinct populations—medical patients coping with chronic pain and physicians coping with having been involved in serious medical errors—*Choosing Wisdom* delves into how average people respond to adversity, how they change, and what factors help or hinder positive change. Through these interviews, the authors chart each person’s journey, and though the circumstances of each case may be unique, the commonalities are remarkable.

By paying careful attention to the journeys of these exemplars, this cutting-edge research will shed new light on how we can grow, change, and develop wisdom through adversity. It will be a welcome source of inspiration for anyone facing their own difficult journey and for those who seek to aid them along the way.

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