

# She Changed Her Life for the Better. Here's How.

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## the DROP

**SHE CHANGED HER LIFE FOR THE BETTER. HERE'S HOW.**

*After loss, some people transform themselves in inspiring ways. What can we learn from their experiences?*



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**'It's Been a Rollercoaster'**

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Fiona Tapp in Ottawa, Canada

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Music industry professional Isabel Sachs experienced job loss and the breakdown of her marriage during the pandemic. She also found a new passion.

In the early days of COVID-19, she began to channel her energy into a new idea: a volunteer initiative designed to support others in the creative fields. She launched [I LIKE NETWORKING](#), a platform to facilitate networking and mentoring for creative professionals like herself. The response to the launch was so overwhelming that Sachs quickly realized it was more than a volunteer concept and was fast becoming not only a career path but also a social enterprise. She found herself stepping into the role of public speaker, and delivering an online talk for the staff of The New York Times.

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Sachs says that a simple question can help you make small steps toward growth after trauma...



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Yet this success would not have emerged if not for COVID-19 and Sachs' particular way of responding to the challenges she encountered.

"The whole pandemic took a toll on my relationship, and at the end of 2021 we started the divorce process," Sachs explained. Her situation was not unique. When asked by the [American Family Survey](#), 25% of married people reported that the pandemic increased stress in their marriage, rising to 37% if they were also experiencing economic hardship. The U.K.'s largest family law firm reported a [95% increase in inquiries](#) for divorce attorneys during the height of the pandemic.

"Navigating a new business, the end of a relationship and the new cost-of-living crisis we're facing hasn't been easy," Sachs told OZY. "It's been a rollercoaster."

How, then, has she managed to land on such a positive path?

The answer seems to be what's known as post-traumatic growth, or PTG. (This newsletter is the second installment in a [series](#) about PTG.) Post-traumatic growth is when a person discovers new passions, meaning or direction following stressful or life-changing experiences. It is the process of not only surviving trauma, but finding a way to thrive.



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Sachs says that a simple question can help you make small steps toward growth after trauma: Are you living a life that is aligned with your core values?

Core values are principles in which you believe deeply and that can help clarify what matters most. Your core values might include kindness, leadership, adventure, freedom or creativity.

To uncover your core values, spend some time reflecting on your passions and beliefs. Such beliefs could be rooted in childhood ambitions, or they might be influenced by people you admire and the qualities they possess. Perhaps you always dreamed of being a teacher, or starting your own business. Maybe a family member or colleague displays dedication, empathy or ambition that you'd like to emulate. Or you may find freedom and autonomy from exercise, travel, art or community service, among many other possibilities.

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I think in times of crisis it is always good to shift our perspective from who will help me to how can I be of service — that can lead to innovation.

- Isabel Sach 

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Once recognized and acknowledged, these values can direct your personal and professional life. They can also be shaped into a mantra to bring you back toward your purpose whenever you may stray from your life's mission.

"I think in times of crisis it is always good to shift our perspective from who will help me to how can I be of service — that can lead to innovation," said Sachs. Her own venture came about almost by chance, as she did not initially intend for it to be a business. Rather, she saw a need in her industry and created her platform as a volunteer.

Once you've named your core values, Sachs recommends a pragmatic approach to taking action. "Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I think about ONE thing I can do that will take me somewhere," she explained.

The "one thing" you can do could be a small step toward living a life that supports your values. For example, you could satisfy your longing for creativity by taking a painting class. Or exercise a core value of adventure by hiking on the weekend. Identifying core values and taking small steps can be the start of a whole new life.

## It's Not the Same as Resilience

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Although they might sound similar, being resilient is not the same as experiencing growth after a traumatic experience. Peggy Loo, psychologist and director of the [Manhattan Therapy Collective](#), describes resilience as “psychological elasticity.” Such elasticity is what allows a person to endure extreme hardship without being knocked down, or helps them get up again if they’ve been dealt a terrible blow. Post-traumatic growth, on the other hand, “is when a positive change or transformation occurs as a result of adverse events,” said Loo.

She noted that a crucial aspect of post-traumatic growth is that people often come to see themselves as advocates instead of victims.

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“They go from seeing themselves as victims of circumstance to empowered voices committed to change in a public sphere,” Loo explained.

Loo was quick to point out that not everyone experiences this type of growth following trauma. She suggested that, rather than expecting such a dramatic shift in ourselves, it’s healthy to allow time for introspection.

Among her own clients, Loo has seen many people leave unsatisfying relationships or jobs, and reevaluate their life priorities, amidst the fallout from the pandemic.

“There is a sense that your time is precious, and your plans are not a given,” she said. “I’ve seen people acting more decisively and clarifying personal values as the reason for making a decision, rather than making decisions based on fear or avoidance.”

Clarifying core values can help you start a new chapter based on the lessons you’ve learned. This might lead toward altruism or a new business, as it did for Sachs, or into as-yet-unimagined terrain.





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**Whose story of transformation inspires you? Tell us about it.**

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