

to threat is low-intensity and short-term. PTG requires a significant perception of threat to survival and takes time to develop, as people think about the event and reevaluate their life priorities. People's initial response to life-threatening events may be defensive. However, over time, continuing mortality awareness may contribute to positive psychological growth.

Cozzolino and his colleagues (2004) created a vicarious **death reflection** manipulation that paralleled the essential features of near-death experiences. The positive growth effects of near-death experiences are thought to result from life review processes and from taking the perspective of others. Life review and perspective-taking are based on reports of people who have had near-death experiences. Such individuals say they intensely relived their lives and their interactions with significant others. Reliving life through one's own eyes and through the eyes of others is thought to be responsible for the changes in life priorities and self-conceptions associated with near-death experiences.

Participants in the death reflection condition were asked to read and imagine the following event actually happening to them (Cozzolino et al., 2004, p. 290, Appendix A):

Imagine that you are visiting a friend who lives on the 20th floor of an old, downtown apartment building. It's the middle of the night when you are suddenly awakened from a deep sleep by the sound of screams and the choking smell of smoke. You reach over to the nightstand and turn on the light. You are shocked to find the room filling fast with thick clouds of smoke. You run to the door and reach for the handle. You pull back in pain as the intense heat of the knob scalds you violently. Grabbing a blanket off the bed and using it as protection, you manage to turn the handle and open the door. Almost immediately, a huge wave of flame and smoke pours into the room, knocking you back and literally off your feet. There is no way to leave the room. It is getting very hard to breathe and the heat from the flames is almost unbearable. Panicked, you scramble to the only window in the room and try to open it. As you struggle, you realize that the old window is virtually painted shut around all the edges. It doesn't budge. Your eyes are barely open now, filled with tears from the smoke. You try calling for help but the air to form the words is not here. You drop to the floor hoping to escape the rising smoke, but it is too late. The room is filled top to bottom with thick fumes and nearly entirely in flames. With your heart pounding, it suddenly hits you, as time seems to stand still, that you are literally moments away from dying. The inevitable unknown that was always waiting for you has finally arrived. Out of breath and weak, you shut your eyes and wait for the end.

After reading this death scenario, participants were asked to answer the following questions (Cozzolino et al., 2004, p. 281):

1. *Please describe in detail the thoughts and emotions you felt while imagining the scenario.*
2. *If you did experience this event, how do you think you would handle the final moments?*
3. *Again imagining it did happen to you, describe the life you led up to that point*
4. *How do you feel your family would react if it did happen to you?*

Questions 3 and 4 were meant to parallel the life review and perspective-taking described by individuals who have actually survived near-death experiences. Participants in the control conditions read and imagined more positive scenarios and were asked to write about their thoughts and feelings about the scenario in response to questions paralleling those of the death reflection condition.

In an additional study, PTG and terror management predictions were evaluated by comparing the effects of death reflection to those of mortality salience. In this "mortality salience" condition (following terror management research methodology), participants were simply asked to describe their thoughts and feelings regarding their own death.