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Dr Divine Charura and Dr John Allan

**Spiritual Development, Meaning-making,
Resilience and Potential for Post-traumatic
Growth among Asylum-seekers and Refugees:
An interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section
Biennial Conference, 5th-7th July 2017,
Aberystwyth

Resilience

- Bio-psycho-social interactive construct
- Maintaining **internal** well-being and adapting to the **external** environment

‘Personal growth’

‘Bounce-back-ability’

‘Bounce-beyond-ability’

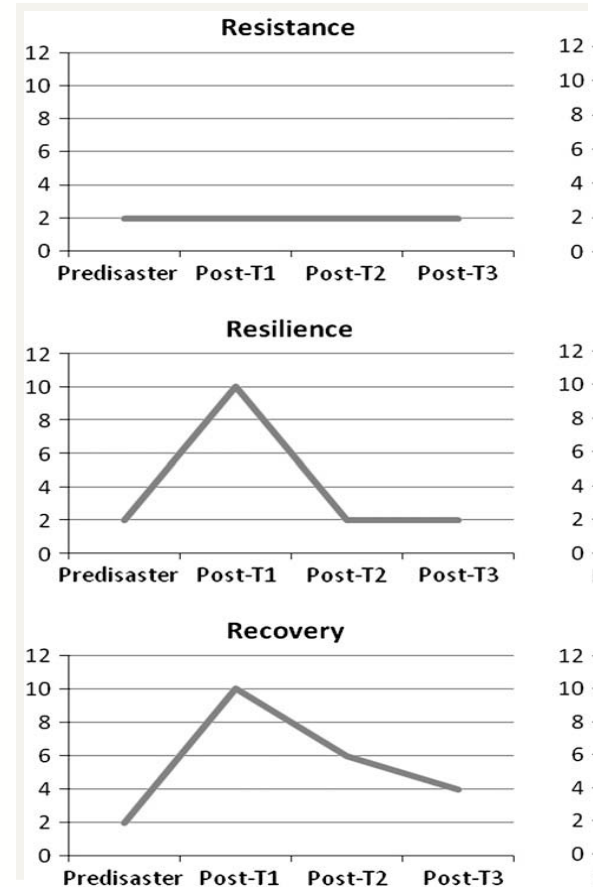
‘Capability in Uncertainty’

- Continuum of surviving to thriving
- Influenced by context and culture
- Domains of functioning include capacity for change, competence, **spirituality**, trust and control (Connor & Davidson, 2003)



Resilience as a trajectory

- Time required to reinstate a state of equilibrium once displaced
- Potential for post-traumatic growth among asylum-seekers and refugees
- Opportunities for interventions to increase resilience, and decrease adverse trajectories following traumatic events



Norris et al (2009)

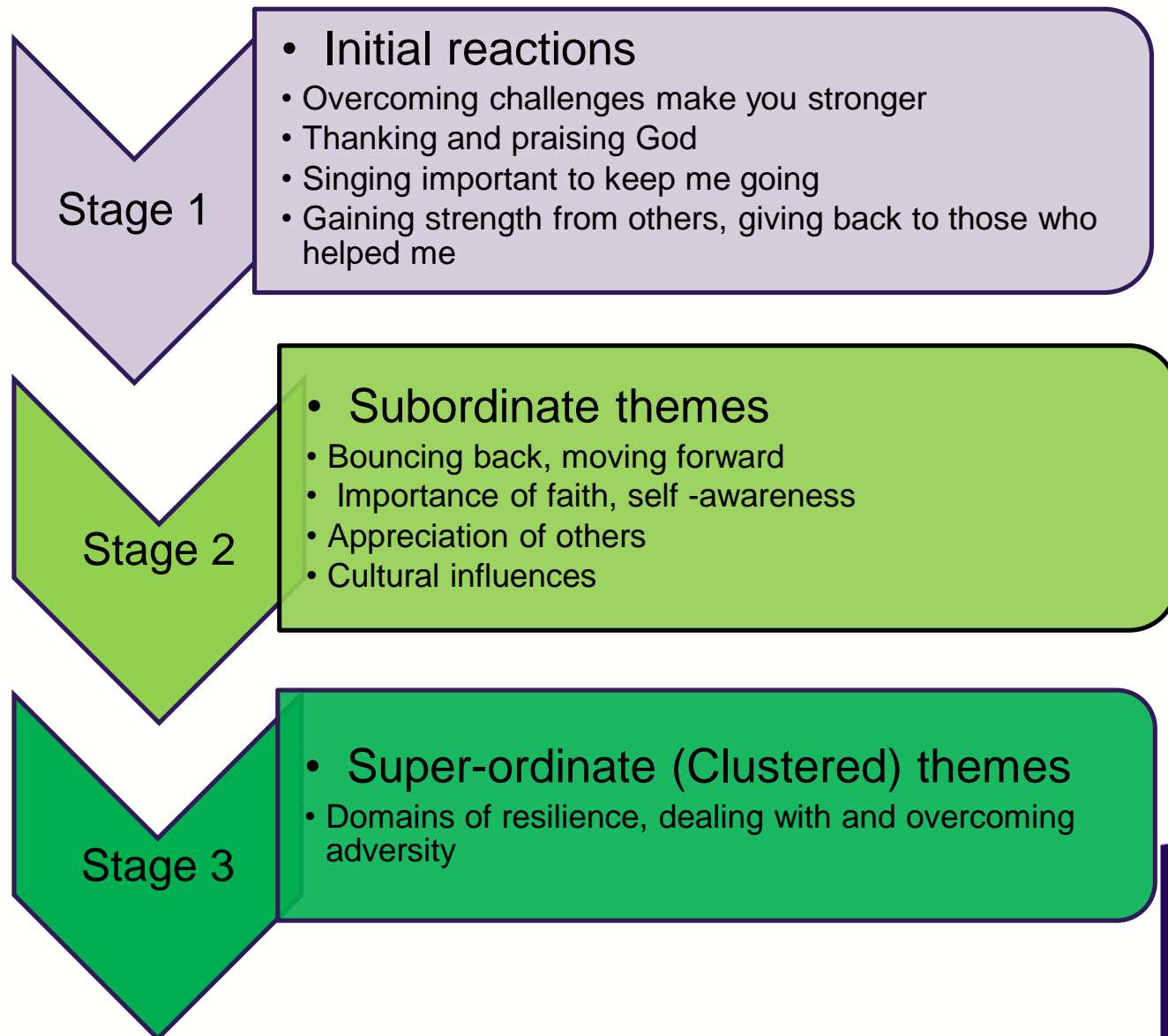
Meaning-making: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

- 'interpretation of meaning for a particular person in a particular context' [Refugees and Asylums seekers] (Smith et al., 2009, p. 196)
- IPA is interpretative through double hermeneutics. A process in which 'The participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world' (Smith, 2004, p. 40)

Demographics

Sample = 12							
Countries of origin	Nigeria 4	Guinea 3	Sierra Leone 1	Democratic Republic of Congo 1	Liberia 1	Zimbabwe 1	Iran 1
Age range	28 – 61 years						
Gender	Female 9	Male 3					
Sexuality	Heterosexual 9	Bisexual 1	None of these 2				
Marital status	Single 5	Married 3	Widowed 2	Other 2 (‘in a relationship’ and ‘separated’)			
Status in UK	Asylum seeker 8	Refugee 3	Other 1				
Place of residence in UK	Leeds 9	Bradford 3					
Time in UK	5-21 years						
Residence in other countries prior to coming to the UK	1 (France)						

IPA Process (sample)



Super-ordinate themes (sample)

Layers of stress
and trauma

Personal impact

Importance of
support

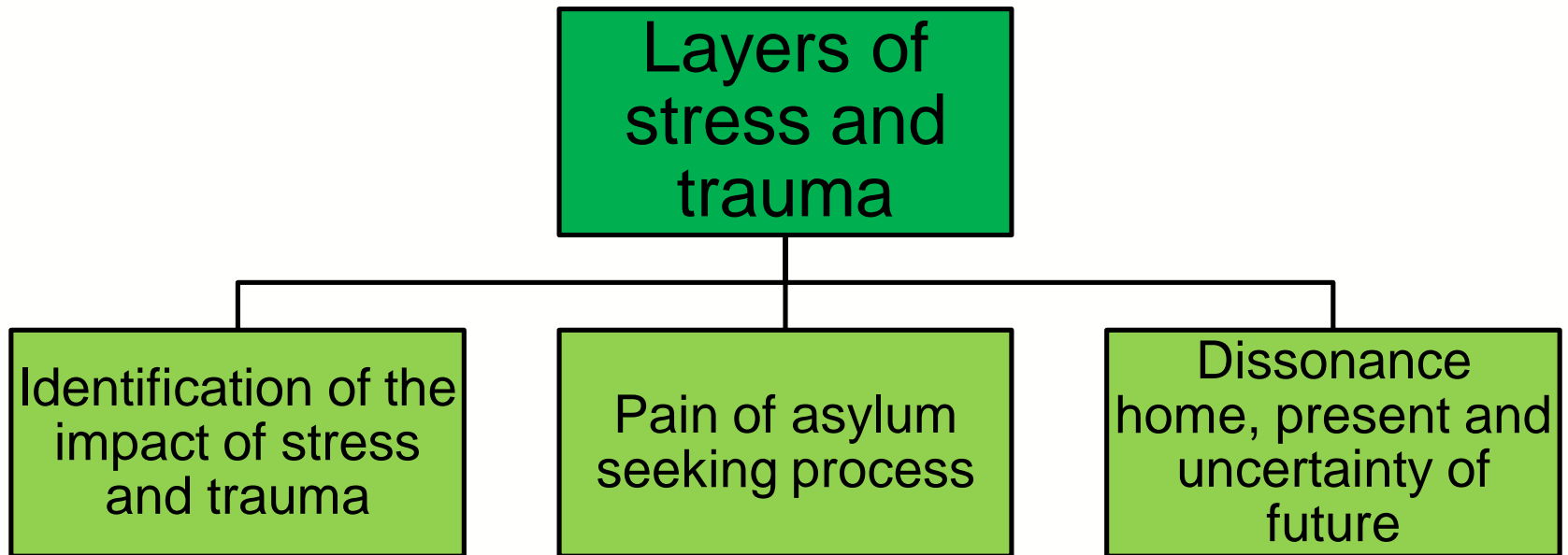
Awareness of
development of
self and identity

Importance of
spirituality

Development of
resilience

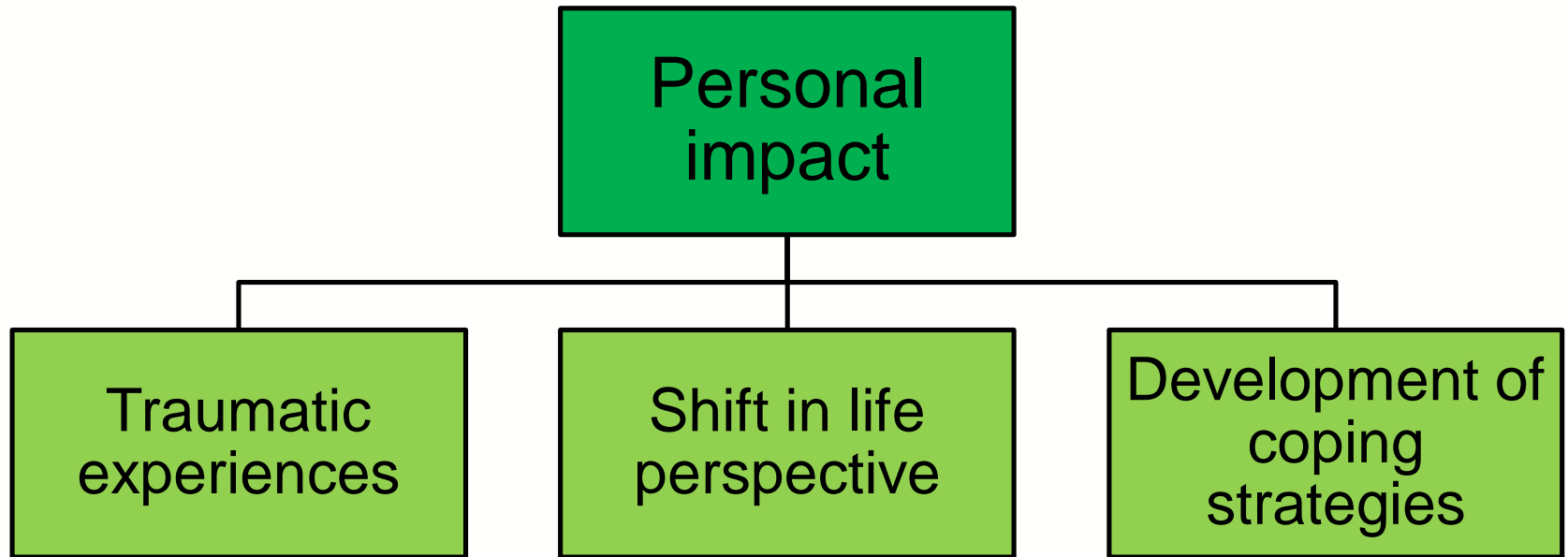
Stress and Trauma

“I was thinking that the police may come and report us, to deport us... It had a bad impact on me ... after that I felt depressed. And even after I had permission to live, I couldn't open the door to people... I didn't have confidence to go out.”



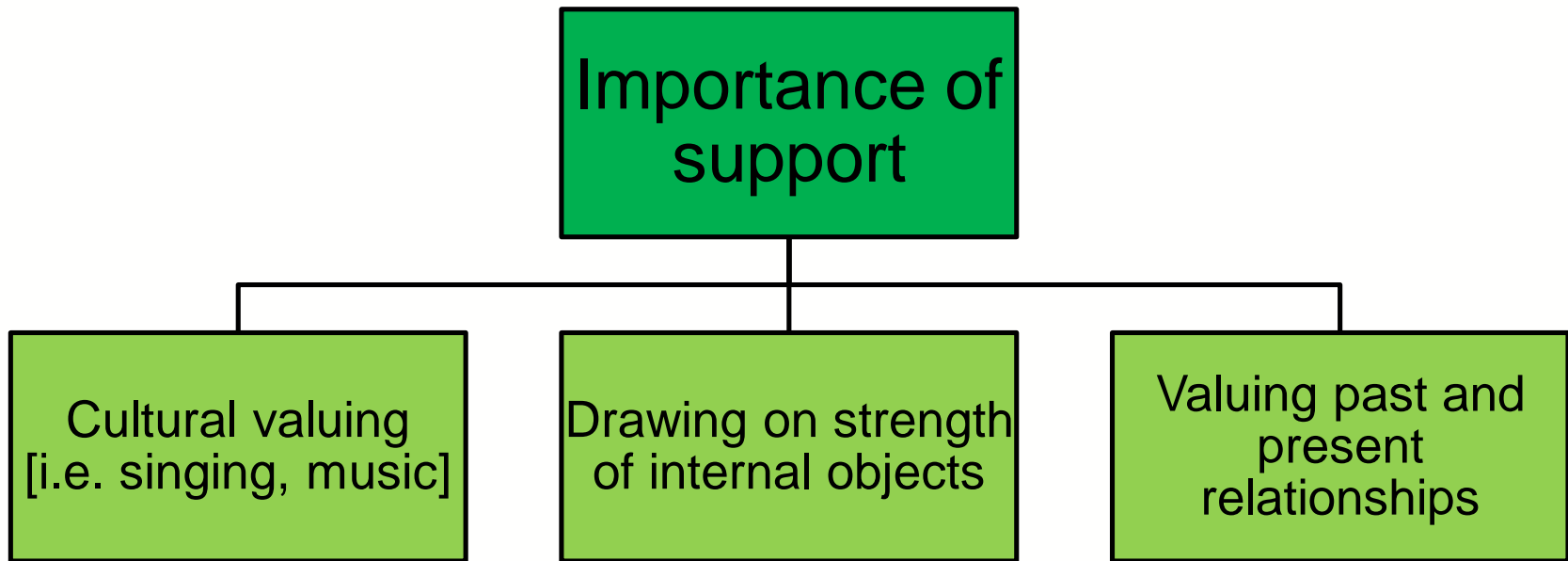
Personal Impact

“To be patient. Yeah. Patience is golden I think. “
“It’s harder to smile but I think it’s good to smile as well because if you are with people if you smile their smiles will encourage them and through your smiles positive things will come to you. But if you are with people you are sad you make everyone else sad as well.”

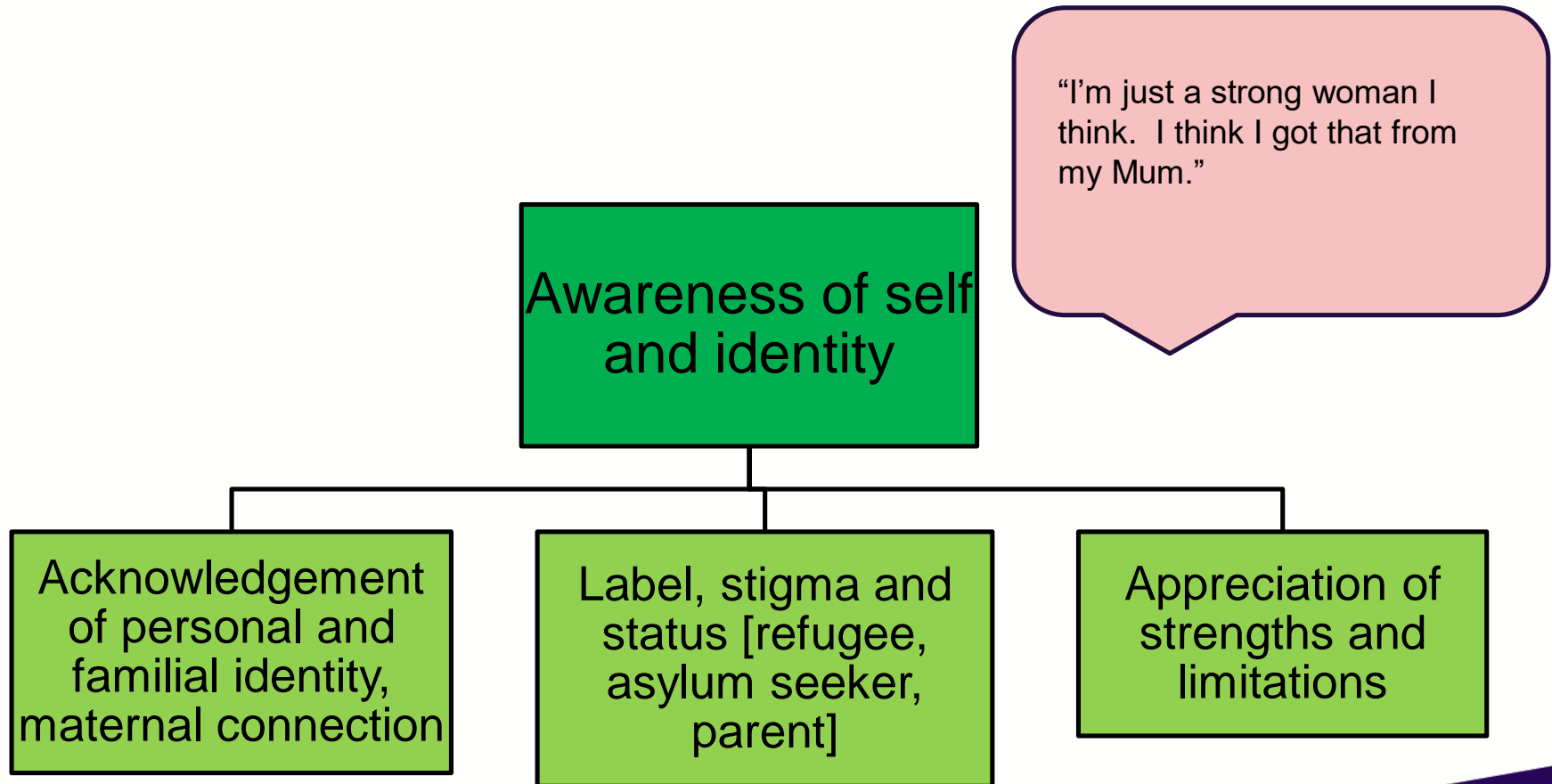


Importance of support

“Those are the people that matter to me and that’s why I wanted to bring my residential permit card. It matters to me too because it always reminds me of the people who have been there for me.”
“There are still good people out there.”



Awareness of development of self and identity



Importance of spirituality

“God can use people to help people. “
“So being religious helps you do cope with your problems.”
“I believe in God. I know there is a God hiding.” “ If I get angry with God that means I’m getting angry with myself.”
“It’s sometimes difficult to understand but, all the same, it’s a life lesson. “

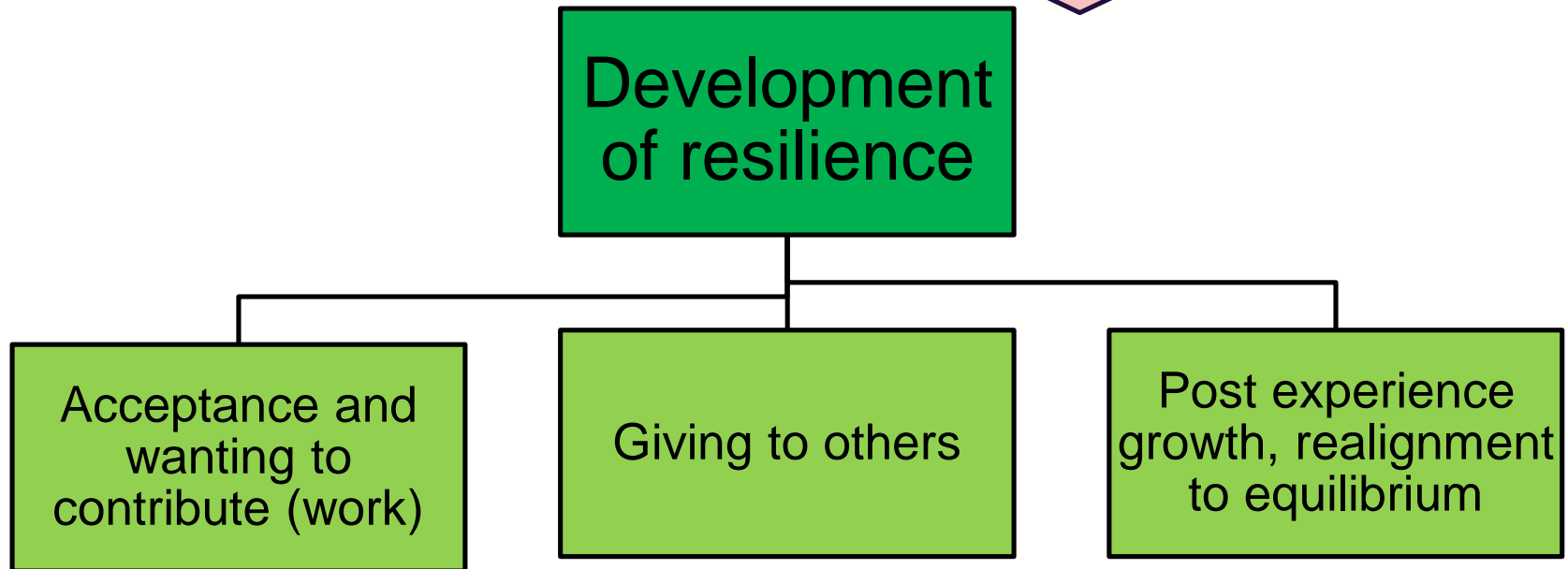
Importance of spirituality

Religion, faith and spirituality

Developing a personal philosophy, drawing from traumatic experiences

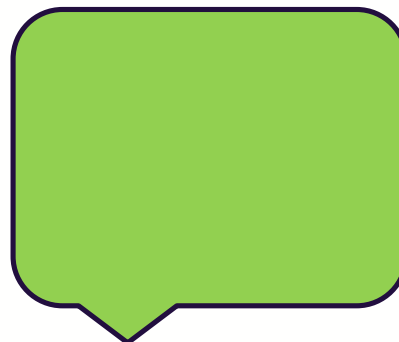
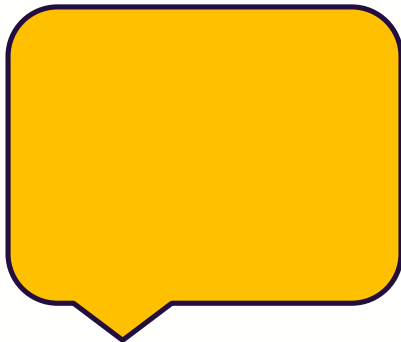
Development of resilience

“Put the past behind you, and look forward to the future and see what the future brings for you. Give back.” “You listen to other people. You listen to their own life story. You compare yours and their own. Maybe when you listen to other person’s life story maybe it’s even worse than yours.”



Uniqueness and commonalities of responses in line with IPA

- Variations on the growth process (resilience and recovery)
- Similar theme – variability in personal interpretation and use
e.g. Cultural influences may help and hinder, religion perceived as coping mechanism / possible source of blame, degrees of trauma questioned as a mechanism for growth



Summary and conclusion

- Fine-grained insight into complex, multi-layered area
- Uniqueness and commonalities of responses (IPA)
- Key indicators of resilience, spirituality, longitudinal trajectories of responses to stress, post-traumatic growth
- Lasting impact of trauma, time required for reconciling extreme overload
- Provide some guidance for evidence-based interventions to aid assimilation
- Strong affinity / appreciation of help agencies