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## Silver Linings: A principle-based concept analysis examining the emergence of positive changes that accompany adversity

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Silver linings are commonly referenced in healthcare, yet rarely defined. Researchers have defined similar phenomena related to personal growth accompanying a challenge. Despite increased use in the literature, the meaning of the concept remains ambiguous.

**Objective:** To define the concept of *silver linings* through a principle-based concept analysis.

**Methods:** Using a principle-based concept analysis framework, records ( $n = 1513$ ) were retrieved through MEDLINE, Embase, the Cochrane Library, PsycINFO, and CINAHL Plus. Eligibility criteria narrowed the field to 582 abstracts. The research team screened the resulting abstracts for relevance and selected 92 articles (1966 to 2022) for full review. After review, 32 articles were included for detailed thematic principle-based quality appraisals, of which 27 met final criteria. Preconditions, characteristics, similarities to related concepts, and outcomes were collected, analyzed, and synthesized to formulate a theoretical definition.

**Results:** Articles originated from 19 countries with conceptual commonalities that described silver linings, post-traumatic growth, and benefit finding. The pre-condition included an adverse event or series of challenging events, which led to a personal, paradoxical, and surprising awareness. Derived themes included pattern shifting, connection, and opportunities, with sub-themes described. Outcomes or consequences were related to improved coping, engagement in care, mental health, goal attainment, and ultimately, a new normal. Creative strategies to support the emergence and awareness of silver linings are presented.

**Conclusion:** Our definition of silver linings creates a foundation for future research to examine how they interact with health outcomes of people experiencing adversity, including chronic illness, mental health challenges, or acute traumatic events.

## What is already known about the topic

Historically, the concept of silver linings has helped individuals experience positive life changes following adversity, such as improved coping strategies, enhanced quality of life, and greater appreciation for life.

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The concept of silver linings gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic as nurses and healthcare providers described positive practice changes despite ongoing challenges of managing healthcare in a worldwide pandemic.

### What this paper adds

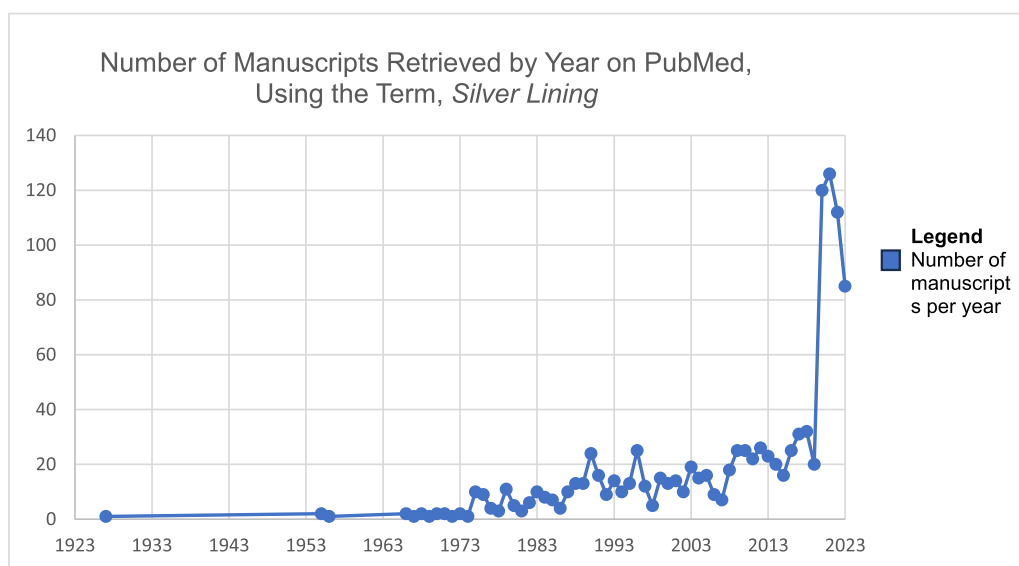
The concept of silver linings is examined systematically and defined as a surprising shift in personal perceptions, patterns, connections, and opportunities that paradoxically arise from life-altering or challenging circumstances.

Silver linings are associated with positive outcomes such as improved coping, engagement in healthcare, positive impacts on mental health, and accomplishment of goals leading to an acceptance of a new normal.

## 1. Background

Nearly everyone recognizes the phrase, “Every cloud has a silver lining.” The common perception of a *silver lining* is that after experiencing adversity, a positive outcome may emerge from the darkness. The Cambridge dictionary defines a silver lining as “a sign of hope in an unfortunate or gloomy situation; a bright prospect” (Cambridge, 2024). This colloquial expression gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic as nurses and healthcare providers described positive practice changes despite ongoing obstacles (Brunton, 2021; Dohrn et al., 2022; Lombe et al., 2021). Universally, discussions of silver linings became a new normal among people from diverse occupations, including food and hospitality, education, and healthcare (Gallegos et al., 2022; Jetten et al., 2021; Schur et al., 2020). Seemingly overnight, people came together to solve problems creatively and efficiently with more effective outcomes. For example, ambulatory telehealth visits at our quaternary children’s hospital increased from 20 per day in 2019 to over 1200 per day in March 2020 (Frunzi, 2020). In contrast to the slow pace of dedicated teams working for years to develop telemedicine programs prior to the pandemic, telehealth had instantaneously become a silver lining (McAlearney et al., 2022), providing meaningful connections for patients, providers, institutions, and the community.

The concept of a silver lining in health care is not new to scientific inquiry. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) first developed a tool to measure what they defined as post-traumatic growth in the 1990’s. Sodergren and Hyland (2000) explored positivity in the face of illness, creating the aptly named Silver Lining Questionnaire (SLQ38) to measure the positive consequences of illness. McBride et al. (2009) later updated the *Silver Lining Questionnaire*, measuring what the authors term as *adversarial growth*, but except for the title of the questionnaire, they do not use the term silver lining in their paper or the body of the questionnaire. Several concepts that overlap with silver linings have been described, including benefit finding (Antoni et al., 2001; Affleck and Tennen, 1996) and finding meaning (Reilly et al., 2021; Park, 2010) in a healthcare crisis or traumatic event. Aside from the SLQ38, clever manuscript titles (Pata et al., 2020), or a concept description (Roepke, 2015), the term *silver lining* is not commonly used in scientific literature. Participants in qualitative research studies use the term silver linings to define a positive life change (Goyal et al., 2022; Molinaro et al., 2017). Thus, clinicians and scientists find themselves using terminology readily understood by patients and families that is not well defined (Graham and Brooke, 2008). During the pandemic, silver linings began to emerge in the literature (Fig. 1) as a more common way to



**Fig. 1.** Manuscripts in a PubMed Search of *Silver Linings* by Year.

**Note:** PubMed search on March 1, 2024, for the term “Silver Lining”

describe positive changes that accompany adversity.

There is other evidence supporting the overlap of these terms with silver linings (Pata et al., 2020; Roepke, 2015; Goyal et al., 2022; Molinaro et al., 2017; Graham and Brookey, 2008), but the specific definition of the concept of *silver linings* was not differentiated despite the rapid increase of its use in the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) database in tandem with COVID-19 emergence (Fig. 1). The purpose of this principle-based concept analysis is to address the gap in the healthcare literature regarding the definition of silver linings in the face of adversity.

In the face of this increased, often indiscriminate use of the concept, we sought to clarify its meaning. The purpose of this project was to analyze the concept of silver linings by uncovering its existing themes, preconditions, defining characteristics, and potential outcomes. Toward this end, we implemented a principle-based concept analysis (Morse et al., 1996; Penrod and Hupcey, 2005) through an integrative systematic review and phased approach that included quality appraisal (Smith and Mörelus, 2021). The principle-based concept analysis augments rigor by adding an examination of the manuscripts using four overarching principles: epistemological, pragmatic, linguistic, and logical.

Concepts may be either commonplace or scientific. Although everyday concepts with implied meanings are important in understanding the human experience, they are not easily studied scientifically (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005). Defining a concept requires development "through scientific inquiry into the empirical derivation of the concept, not *carte blanche* acceptance and integration of contextual everyday meaning" (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005). A silver lining is a concept many assume to be commonly understood. We believe it describes a universal phenomenon that encapsulates nuances of similar scientifically developed terms (adversarial growth, post-traumatic growth, benefit finding, and meaning making); however, it has not been studied as a unique concept with scientific inquiry. Using the conventions of a principle-based concept analysis, a systematic search, an evaluation of quality criteria, and a qualitative analysis synergistically enhances the rigor and transparency needed to allow others to use the theoretically derived definition in future research, theory development, clinical care, and manuscripts (Smith and Mörelus, 2021).

## 2. Methods

We implemented a principle-based concept analysis (Morse et al., 1996; Penrod and Hupcey, 2005) through an integrative systematic review and phased approach that included quality appraisal (Smith and Mörelus, 2021). This principle-based concept analysis employed a systematic process guided by four overarching principles: epistemological, pragmatic, linguistic, and logical (Table 1) (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005).

### 2.1. Systematic review

The literature search in a principle-based concept analysis is conceptually driven and evaluated because both adequacy and appropriateness are critical. Penrod and Hupcey (2005) explain that adequacy is related to the volume of data, and appropriateness is related to the concept. Seeking appropriate data becomes crucial when there is a large volume of data, because refining the sample will more likely result in a definition of the concept that is useful. When data regarding the specified concept (in this case, silver linings) are limited, researchers look for similar or related concepts that further support the process of defining the concept. The similar or related concepts we included were post-traumatic growth, adversarial growth, benefit finding, and making meaning.

A literature search in Medline (Ovid) based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Page et al., 2021) was conducted by a professional research librarian on the term *silver lining* using MeSH headings (Table 2). Next, the search strategy was translated from Medline (Ovid) to Embase (Elsevier), Cochrane Library (Wiley), PsycInfo

**Table 1**

Description of the four principles in a principle-based concept analysis.

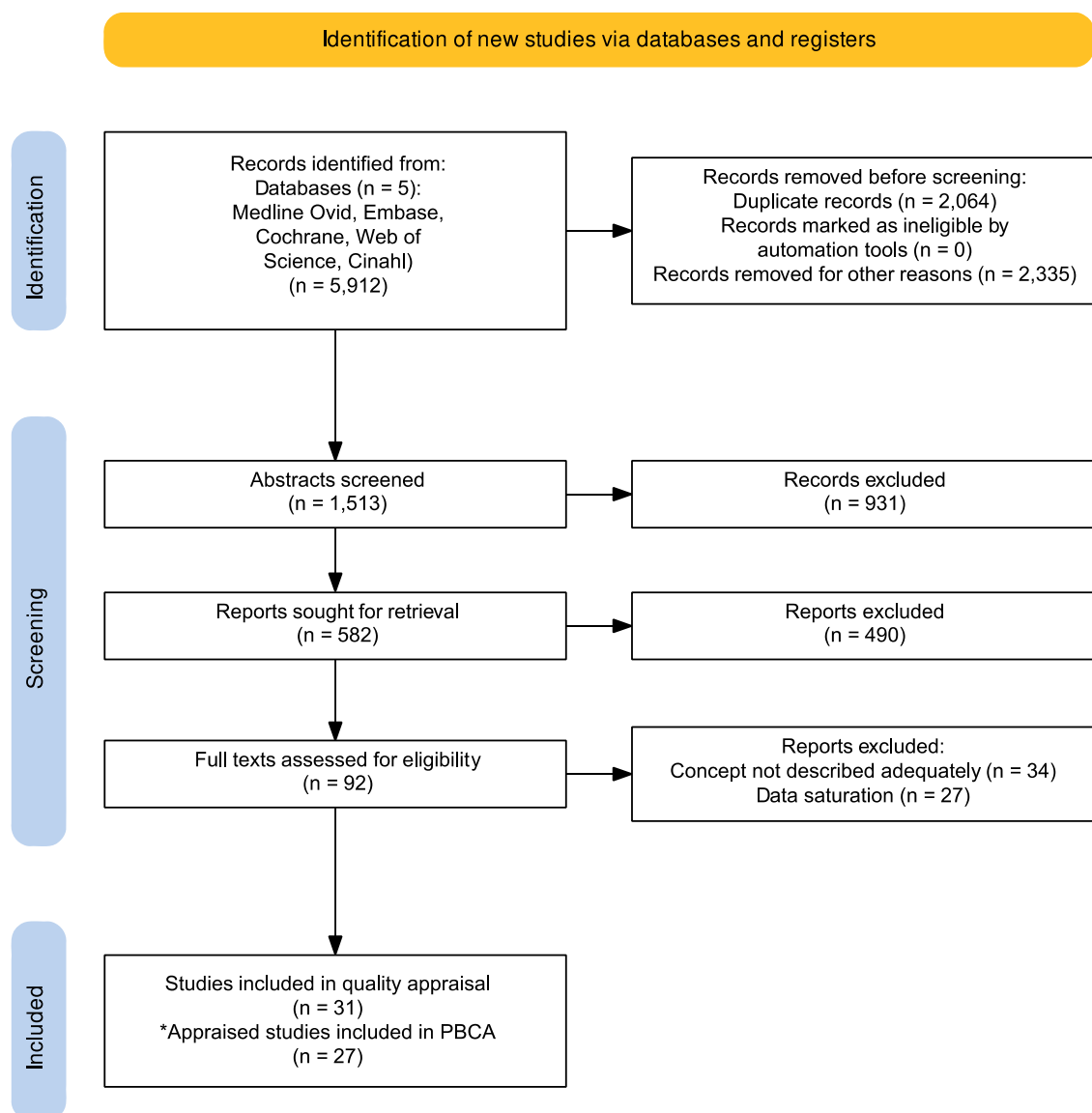
Principle	Definition	Question
Epistemological (Score 0–4)	This principle focuses on knowledge and the unique distinction or existing definition of this concept. "A concept that is epistemologically mature is well-defined, well differentiated from other concepts through that definition, and is clearly positioned in the body of literature" (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005).	Is there a clear definition of the concept that differentiates it from other similar concepts?
Pragmatic (Score 0–4)	This principle focuses on how the concept is applied when detailing or defining the phenomena being studied. "For a concept to be pragmatically mature, members of the discipline should be able to recognize manifestations of the concept; it should ring true with experience" (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005).	Is the concept useful and does it readily apply to scientific inquiry?
Linguistic (Score 0–4)	This principle considers the appropriate use of the language that comprises the concept. An assessment for meaning, consistency in use and context are examined. Concepts may be bound by context or may be studied in a broader contextual realm (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005).	Is the concept described and used within context appropriately and consistently?
Logical (Score 0–2)	This principle focuses on factual reasoning and how the concept is integrated with other related concepts. "Focusing on conceptual boundaries, the data are analyzed to determine if the concept becomes blurred when positioned theoretically with other concepts. Ideally, a concept 'holds its boundaries', meaning that it remains clear or tight, and permits the derivation of systematic interrelationships without getting lost in the theory" (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005).	Does the concept maintain its theoretical boundaries when integrated with other related concepts?

Note: Description of the four principles adapted from Penrod and Hupcey (2005).

**Table 2**  
Medline Ovid Search Strategy for Silver Lining PBCA.

Search number	Search strategy	Items found
1	Post-traumatic Growth, Psychological/	448
2	("posttrauma* growth*" or "post-trauma* growth*" or PTG or "psychological growth*"). ti,ab,kw,kf.	2849
3	"silver lining*". ti,ab,kw,kf.	516
4	(advers* adj3 (grow* or opportunit*)). ti,ab,kw,kf.	2536
5	(mak* adj3 lemonade*). ti,ab,kw,kf.	37
6	1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5	5921
7	exp Patients/	75295
8	patient*. ti,ab,kw,kf.	7532745
9	7 or 8	7557830
10	6 and 9	1307

(Ovid), and CINAHL Plus with Full Text (EBSCO) (Fig. 2). Inclusion criteria were manuscripts that were: a) published in English; b) used quantitative and qualitative designs, c) seminal studies from any time period with a focus on those from the previous 10 years, and d) explored the topic of silver linings, post-traumatic growth, adversarial growth, benefit finding, and/or making meaning. Exclusion



**Fig. 2.** PRISMA diagram.

criteria were conference proceedings, dissertations, and poster presentations. Although our initial search identified the term in publications starting in 1966, we limited our search to the prior 10 years for language relevant to contemporary experiences, however, we included key publications from the early 2000s to capture the evolution of the concept over time. Relevant commentaries and editorials were included because grey literature is useful in describing concepts that are not previously well described, and can offer diverse perspectives and real-world applications (Hoffecker, 2020; Smith and Mörelus, 2021).

The searches conducted in April 2022 yielded 5912 citations in all selected databases. The citations were combined into an EndNote Library (EndNote, 2013) and de-duplicated. A total of 3848 unique citations were identified and searched for relevance to the topic of silver linings. For example, many papers used the term *silver linings* in a title or abstract, but the study had no relevant connection to the phenomenon. This resulted in 1513 abstracts identified, which were then screened according to the eligibility criteria resulting in 582 abstracts. These were reviewed to capture a diverse sample of literature on silver linings and related concepts resulting in 92 full-text articles for full review.

The 92 full-text manuscripts were then reviewed by a multidisciplinary team of five researchers for data saturation, and to collect heterogeneous source types and research methodologies. To reduce the risk of bias, three team members scored each article on the presence of silver linings, including useful data on topics related to silver linings (post-traumatic growth, adversarial growth, and benefit finding). Team members cross-checked the articles to enhance the representation of manuscript types and research methodologies and to improve conceptual diversity (Smith and Mörelus, 2021). We opted to be more inclusive of overlapping concepts to promote generalizability and to avoid the omission of any evolutionary elements of the concept of silver linings. Instead of limiting the search to disease type or the COVID-19 pandemic, we sought articles that described the phenomenon among various chronic conditions and healthcare disciplines to promote generalizability. Finally, we selected 32 publications for quality appraisal.

## 2.2. Quality appraisal

The team completed a quality appraisal as described by Smith and Mörelus (2021) for the remaining 32 articles. Two team members separately scored each manuscript from 0 to 14 based on the four principle-based concept analysis principles (epistemological, pragmatic, linguistic, and logical) (Table 3). If two scores differed by more than 3 points, a third team member completed a review, and the lowest score was dropped. Of the appraised articles ( $n = 32$ ), 23 scored  $\geq 11/14$ , and four articles specifically discussed silver linings despite scoring  $< 11$ . Therefore, 27 articles representing 19 countries were retained (Table 3) and used to complete the concept analysis. While about 40% of the manuscripts ( $n = 11$ ) specifically described silver linings, several ( $n = 6$ ) used the SLQ38, and the remainder ( $n = 10$ ) explored similar overarching concepts. During the quality appraisal, we collected quotes and themes according to the four principles and used these to complete the analysis and derive the themes and subthemes. Audit trails of the search parameters, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and databases of the quality appraisal and data abstraction were maintained.

## 2.3. Theoretical framework

Newman's theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness (HEC) framed this review (Newman, 1994). Newman upended conventional dichotomous notions that health is good, and illness is bad by positing that health, as an expression of the life process, is present regardless of the presence or absence of illness. Health is the pattern of the whole person; illness, crises, and life challenges are manifestations of health, a pattern of evolving, expanding consciousness. "This realization is such that illness and disease have lost their demoralizing power" (Newman, 1994, p. xxii). Chaotic, disorganized patterning accompanying illness and crises can invite transformative change, thereby expanding consciousness. In this process, new life emerges in creative ways, forging connections and highlighting shifting patterns previously unknown or nonexistent (Smith, 2002). Expanding consciousness follows insight, intuition, and understanding. "It illuminates the possibilities for action. It is like the difference between being in the dark and turning on the light: when the light comes on, one can see the possibilities for movement" (Newman, 1990, p.40). Silver linings occurring in the wake of serious illness, or an acute traumatic event may facilitate expanding consciousness or an "evolving pattern of the whole" (Newman, 1990, p.40). Expanding consciousness explores the connection with health and the complex nature of life and its operational systems. It is "characterized by choice points, illuminations, and pattern recognition, resulting in a transformation and discovery of new rules of a higher organization" or new ways of living well (Newman, 1990, p. 40). Studying the phenomenon of silver linings is, likewise, an exploration of expanding consciousness as it relates to the nature of healing. The HEC theory framed the team discussions, thematic coding process, and informed the development of the definition and the conceptual model.

## 3. Results

The findings are summarized according to the four overarching principles, and then conceptual components are synthesized. Finally, the theoretical definition of silver linings based on integrating the conceptual components is presented.

### Principle 1. Epistemological

The epistemological principle is a mechanism to explore how silver linings are defined and differentiated in the literature. While the term *silver lining* is used widely in current literature to identify positive findings that stem from a negative event, the term itself is often not clearly defined. For example, Brunton (2021) discussed telehealth use during the COVID-19 pandemic as "a long overdue silver lining in an extremely cloudy and dangerous medical sky" (p. 13). Telehealth became a 'new normal' that providers expected to emerge for years and then was activated surprisingly and seemingly overnight. Another study exploring nurses' mental and emotional

**Table 3**

Quality appraisal and sample information from final 27 publications reviewed.

Article number	Last name first author (year)	Title	Country	Study Population & Sample Size	*Mean Quality Appraisal Scores				
					Epistemology	Pragmatic	Linguistic	Logistic	Final Total Quality Score
1	Aflakseir, et al. (2018)	Post-traumatic growth, meaningfulness, and social support in women with breast cancer.	Iran	N = 196 women with breast cancer	4	4	4	1.5	13.5
2	Barskova & Oesterreich (2009)	Post-traumatic growth in people living with a serious medical condition and its relations to physical and mental health: A systematic review.	Germany	N = 68 empirical studies, people with life-threatening diseases	4	4	4	2	14
3	Brunton (2021)	Telemedicine: The 2020 house call.	USA	Commentary	0	0	0.5	0	0.5
4	Dohrn et al. (2022)	Addressing mental and emotional health concerns experienced by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic.	USA	N = 636 n = 36 subset qualitative interviews, nurses in COVID-19 pandemic	1.5	2	2	0.5	6
5	Drewes et al. (2021)	Associations between experienced and internalized HIV stigma, adversarial growth, and health outcomes in a nationwide sample of people aging with HIV in Germany.	Germany	N = 839 aging people with HIV	4	3	4	2	13
6	Goyal et al. (2022)	Postpartum depressive symptoms and experiences during COVID-19.	USA	N = 262 postpartum people	0.5	0.5	1.5	0	2.5
7	Harding et al. (2014)	Existence of benefit finding and post-traumatic growth in people treated for head and neck cancer: A systematic review.	United Kingdom	N = 185 people with head and neck cancer	4	4	4	2	14
8	Harding (2018)	The trajectory of positive psychological change in a head and neck cancer population.	United Kingdom	N = 5 papers investigating patients with cancer of the head and neck	4	4	4	2	14
9	Hughes & Cummings (2020)	Grief and loss associated with stroke recovery: A qualitative study of stroke survivors and their spousal caregivers.	USA	N = 14 total n = 9 stroke survivors n = 5 caregivers	4	4	4	2	14
10	Hyland et al. (2006)	Chronic fatigue syndrome: The role of positivity to illness in chronic fatigue syndrome patients.	United Kingdom	N = 53 patients with chronic fatigue	3	4	4	2	13
11	Lennon-Dearing, R. (2020)	"HIV Is a gift": Post-traumatic growth in women with HIV.	USA	N = 23 women with HIV	4	2.5	3.5	1.5	11.5
12	Lombe et al. (2021)	Silver linings: A qualitative study of desirable changes to	Global study: Zambia, United Kingdom, Kenya,	N = 20 caregivers of people with cancer	4	4	4	1.5	13.5

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

Article number	Last name first author (year)	Title	Country	Study Population & Sample Size	*Mean Quality Appraisal Scores				
					Epistemology	Pragmatic	Linguistic	Logistic	Final Total Quality Score
		cancer care during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Malaysia, USA., Canada, Japan, Lebanon, New Zealand, Ghana, Pakistan						
13	Lossio-Ventura et al. (2021)	Identifying silver linings during the pandemic through natural language processing.	USA	N = 3113 people experiencing COVID-19 pandemic	3	4	4	2	13
14	McBride et al. (2009)	The structure of adversarial growth in a sample of cancer patients 8 years post-diagnosis: A revision of the SLQ-38.	Ireland and The Netherlands	N = 206 people with cancer	4	4	4	2	14
15	Milam (2004)	Post-traumatic growth among HIV/AIDS patients.	USA	n = 835 time 1 n = 434 time 2 people with HIV	3.5	4	4	2	13.5
16	Molinaro et al. (2017)	"I just miss her. I just need her here." Life after a mother's cancer.	Canada	N = 1 family that has lost member to cancer n = 4 family members	3	3.5	4	1.5	11.5
17	Molinaro & Fletcher, P. C. (2018)	Taking lemons and making lemonade: Post-traumatic growth from pediatric cancer.	Canada	n = 10 survivors of pediatric cancer n = 9 support people	4	4	4	1	14
18	Onu & Ugwu (2021)	Negative centralization of HIV trauma influences health-related quality of life: Does post-traumatic growth buffer the link?	Nigeria	N = 869 people with HIV	3	4	3.5	2	12.5
19	Riddell et al. (2022)	The context, contribution, and consequences of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative exploration of executive nurses' perspectives.	Australia	N = 14 nursing executives	3	3.5	3	0	9.5
20	Roepke, A. (2014)	Psychosocial interventions and post-traumatic growth: A meta-analysis.	USA	N = 1171 people who faced adversity	3	4	4	2	13
21	Rzeszutek et al. (2017)	Satisfaction with life, big-five personality traits and post-traumatic growth among people living with HIV.	Poland	N = 470 people with HIV	4	3.5	3	1	11.5
22	Rzeszutek (2018)	A longitudinal analysis of post-traumatic growth and affective well-being among people living with HIV: The	Poland	N = 470 people with HIV	3.5	4	2.5	2	13

(continued on next page)



Table 3 (continued)

Article number	Last name first author (year)	Title	Country	Study Population & Sample Size	*Mean Quality Appraisal Scores				
					Epistemology	Pragmatic	Linguistic	Logistic	Final Total Quality Score
23	Sodergren & Hyland(2000)	moderating role of received and provided social support. What are the positive consequences of illness?	United Kingdom	N = 55 people with HIV	4	4	4	2	14
24	Sodergren et al. (2004)	Positivity in illness: self-delusion or existential growth?	United Kingdom	n = 197 people living with illnesses	4	4	4	2	14
25	Weaver et al. (2021)	"We're on a merry-go-round": Reflections of patients and carers after completing treatment for Sarcoma.	Australia	n = 21 people with sarcoma n = 16 caregivers	3	3.5	3	2	11.5
26	Yang, X., et al. (2020)	Direct and indirect associations between interpersonal resources and post-traumatic growth through resilience among women living with HIV in China.	China	n = 546 women with HIV	4	4	4	2	14
27	Yu et al. (2017)	Impacts of making sense of adversity on depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and post-traumatic growth among a sample of mainly newly diagnosed HIV-positive Chinese young homosexual men: the mediating role of resilience.	China and USA.	n = 141 men with HIV	4	4	4	2	14

**Note:** \*Scores based on the *Quality Criteria Tool for a Phased Principle-Based Concept Analysis* (Smith and Mörelus, 2021, pp. 7–8).

health during COVID-19 only mentioned silver linings in the discussion in reference to having hope and being better prepared in the future (Dohrn et al., 2022). Some studies examined and defined silver linings during the COVID-19 pandemic in cancer care (Lombe et al., 2021), natural language processing (Lossio-Ventura et al., 2021), and executive nurse perspectives (Riddell et al., 2022). Other studies explored silver linings among individuals living with HIV/AIDS (Milam, 2004) and in patients and caregivers after sarcoma treatment completion (Weaver et al., 2021). The term *silver lining* was not well differentiated from post-traumatic growth / adversarial growth or benefit finding explicitly in the studies in this review.

Across studies, we found there was a generally accepted meaning of silver linings. Healthcare providers appear to assume that patients know what it means and that we all agree on the definition, even when patients may not understand what post-traumatic growth is and, in fact, may find the term confusing and may believe it is a negative construct. We included post-traumatic growth / adversarial growth and benefit finding in our search to allow for deeper descriptions and more examples, yielding greater insight into the concept. Across studies, we found that a silver lining appeared to an individual (Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009; Rzeszutek, 2018; Sodergren et al., 2004) in a surprising (Milam, 2004; Riddell et al., 2022; Hughes and Cummings, 2020) and paradoxical way (Rzeszutek et al., 2017; Milam, 2004; Weaver et al., 2021; Hughes and Cummings, 2020). For example, in the midst of adversity, participants find positive outcomes to be surprising, including the paradox of feeling good about something that is inherently challenging or deeply sad. In some cases, seeing a silver lining in the midst of a trauma or crisis can be challenging, and it may only emerge after much time has passed (Hughes and Cummings, 2020). It can be life-changing (Rzeszutek et al., 2017; Sodergren and Hyland, 2000; McBride et al., 2009), can enhance gratitude (Hughes and Cummings, 2020; Lennon-Dearing, 2022), and may be called a new normal (Brunton, 2021; Dohrn et al., 2022; Weaver et al., 2021). While the concept of a silver lining as a positive shift or an experience of new opportunities was commonly used for practice and research, ultimately, the literature reviewed lacked a distinction between silver linings and similar concepts.

## Principle 2. Pragmatic



We used the pragmatic principle to examine the concept's usefulness or how it is relevant to patient care and research. We assessed the included studies for manifestations of silver linings in practice and reviewed how this phenomenon can be measured. We found that the healthcare team may benefit from using silver linings to describe life changes, new opportunities, and perspective shifts that may improve patient engagement in care, hope, connection with others, and patient-provider trust. Silver linings helped promote positive psychology in healthcare (Hyland et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2020).

Silver linings were operationalized for providers to see positivity in people living with serious illness and HIV (Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009; Milam, 2004; Onu and Ugwu, 2021). In people with chronic pain, nurses could use psychosocial interventions to help patients with benefit finding (Roepke, 2015). Examples of silver linings for practitioners included health behavior changes in women with HIV, such as sobriety or practicing safer sex, increased physical activity, and healthy eating (Lennon-Dearing, 2022). Silver linings in healthcare can be viewed in the context of improved coping, communication, social support, and hope (Milam, 2004).

Researchers have found the concept of silver linings may be useful when studying post-traumatic growth, benefit finding, stress appraisal and making sense of adversity (Drewes et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2017). Silver linings in research had an inverse relationship with depression/anxiety and a positive correlation with physical functioning and cognitive aging. Although silver linings are more difficult to relate to health outcomes, they may be useful for studying psychosocial interventions (Drewes et al., 2021). A pragmatic research technique included the term *silver linings* as it related to positivity directly in qualitative questioning: "Although this is a challenging time, can you tell us about any positive effects or 'silver linings' you have experienced during this crisis?" (Lossio-Ventura et al., 2021).

The concept of silver linings helped patients to experience the opportunities and life changes that occur with a chronic illness diagnosis or significant adverse health event. Clinicians benefitted from using silver linings in supporting patient activation and engagement in care, treatment adherence, engagement, positivity and coping with a new normal (Hyland et al., 2006; Sodergren and Hyland, 2000).

### Principle 3. Linguistic

The linguistic principle focuses on the language used to describe the concept, including if the term is used appropriately and consistently in language and speech (Penrod and Hupcey, 2005). We identified the conceptual semantics of silver linings based on their key attributes and characteristics across the contexts of multiple articles (Table 3). For our linguistic analysis, we applied an inductive approach to explore the appropriateness and consistency of the concept's use.

Silver linings were described appropriately in multiple articles, such as a description of a personal awareness of a silver lining that was often surprising and paradoxical (Rzeszutek et al., 2017; Sodergren et al., 2004). The *paradoxical* findings of good arising from bad were reflected through contrasting terms such as "shadows" and "dark" with "shining light" and "bright side" (Brunton, 2021; Goyal et al., 2022). The *personal* perspective encompassed the concepts of appreciation, positivity, and personal growth as a learning experience after experiencing adversity (Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009; Drewes et al., 2021). Silver linings were sometimes *surprising*, as patients emerged, forging new connections, patterns, and opportunities (Hughes and Cummings, 2020; Milam, 2004). *Connection* was identified as a silver lining attribute based on the relational nature of the concepts described, such as trust, empathy, and social support (Lennon-Dearing, 2022). *Pattern shifts* were apparent based on transformations in spirituality, hope, finding strength, and emerging to a higher self (Roepke, 2015). *Opportunities* arose to improve care for oneself and others, give back, and reset priorities (Milam, 2004; Rzeszutek et al., 2017). *Awareness* emerged as an overarching concept because one must notice, or become aware of, their own silver lining and identify it as such. Many people feel there are no silver linings to their challenges, and others are not yet aware of their existence (Lombe et al., 2021; Sodergren and Hyland, 2000).

The key attributes of silver linings were described consistently across studies. We examined the selected articles internally and comparatively for consistent use of terminology to describe attributes and meanings. Silver linings were conceptually described directly or operationalized using synonyms such as post-traumatic growth (Rzeszutek, 2018). Silver linings were routinely described as a form of coping, implied positive outcomes, and a new normal (Brunton, 2021; Dohrn et al., 2022; Weaver et al., 2021). The tension between benefit finding in adversity and light amidst darkness appeared repeatedly in reference to silver linings (Lombe et al., 2021). Where silver linings frequently appeared passively emerging in the form of benefit finding (Lossio-Ventura et al., 2021), in contrast, post-traumatic growth was often described as an active experience or process in which a stressful experience catalyzed change (McBride et al., 2009). Key attributes such as *pattern shifting*, *connecting*, and *opportunities* appeared across all articles reviewed regardless of whether silver linings or post-traumatic growth terminology was used.

### Principle 4. Logical

We evaluated the logical principle by reviewing the theoretical underpinnings identified by the selected studies. Studies received higher scores if they described a theoretical foundation for their research (based on principle-based concept analysis criteria). Few studies included a strong theoretical background, which corresponded with the lack of both ontological and epistemological descriptions.

Several of the studies were based on a theoretical model, and in some cases, the findings were used to formulate theory. Drewes et al. (2021) used the term adversarial growth because it broadly defined personal growth related to an adverse event that pushes an individual to a higher level of functioning. The authors used a theoretical model described by Sawyer et al. (2010) wherein a traumatic event is an insult to a person's belief system, and they need to make meaning or find growth to repair and create a new normal. Onu and Ugwu (2021) employed the organismic valuing theory of post-traumatic growth, which relies on the individual's inherent predilection to integrate their challenging experiences by infusing meaning as they move toward wellness. Weaver et al. (2021) used a commonsense model that looked at health risks as a threat to an individual, and how the individual's reaction to the threat mitigates

dangerous outcomes. Barskova and Oesterreich (2009) discussed the importance of inclusivity in the theoretical model. Indeed, silver linings may vary among people of different races, ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic status. Sodergren and Hyland (2000) reviewed multiple theoretical explanations, such as patients leaving their unattainable goals behind and shifting focus to a more accessible existential goal. They also discussed a theoretical model in which patients change problematic behavior, thereby taking better care of themselves and seeking creative ways to accomplish a previously cherished goal.

Although there was not a consistent theoretical framework applied across studies, the theoretical underpinnings of the related terms are well described and can be readily applied to the concept of silver linings. The theoretical basis found in the selected studies served as a scaffold along with our chosen framework, HEC. Our in-depth analysis highlights the gap in the literature of an evidence-based conceptual model of silver linings.

### 3.1. Conceptual components of silver lining

After synthesizing the literature in relation to the four principles, we reviewed the articles using a reflexive analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2019) to understand further the preconditions, characteristics, and outcomes of silver linings. The reflexive approach included using the HEC theory to inform independent coding and interpretation, and a series of team based reflective discussions involving thematic refinement. During team meetings the themes were revisited as needed to recode for consistency, and a reflexive reporting process was documented to discuss the influence of individual disciplinary backgrounds and experiences leading to potential bias in our analysis. *Preconditions* refer to the conditions that must exist for the silver lining to appear. The *characteristics* are the attributes of a silver lining, or how one experiences and describes the elements of the concept. The *outcomes* describe the impact of a silver lining on the individual and the community. A conceptual model (Fig. 3) was developed to provide a deeper understanding of the

## Emergence of a Silver Lining

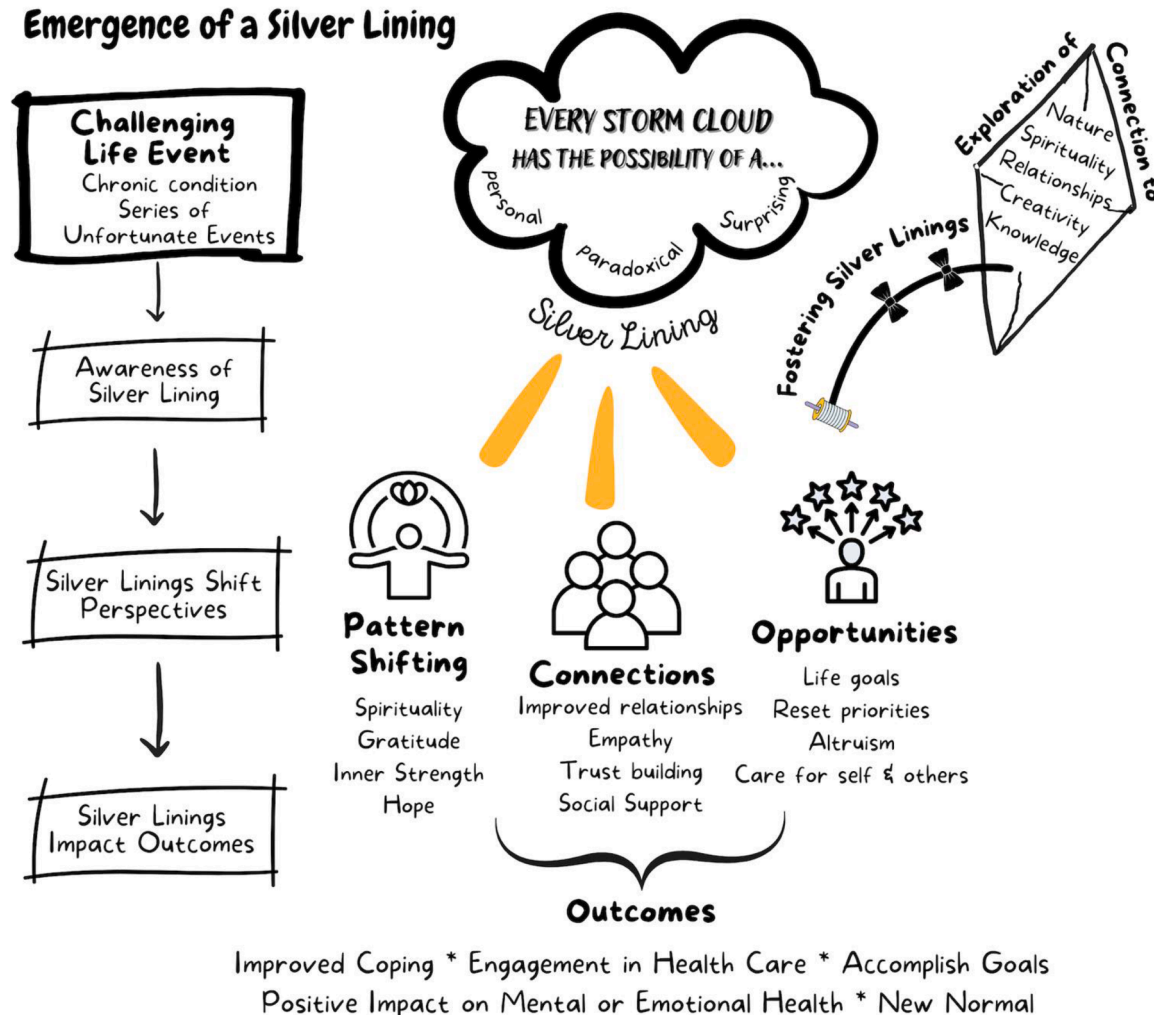


Fig. 3. Conceptual Model of Silver Lining.

Note: Conceptual model of the theoretical definition of Silver Linings outlined in Table 4 including precondition, characteristics, and outcomes.

conceptual components of the new definition. The kite indicates the five concepts related to the cultivation of silver linings found in other reviews and published studies. The kite symbolizes an activity for a windy day that may bring joy or connection with others. One must build a kite and then use the wind to make it fly. The kite was also famously used by Benjamin Franklin in 1752 to find a way to capture electricity in a jar for later use. Therefore, like Franklin and his kite, one can build and cultivate a silver lining or capture the energy found in a storm to light the way. Individuals may find that activities related to nature, spirituality, relationships, creativity, and knowledge lend themselves to the emergence of a silver lining.

### 3.1.1. Preconditions to a silver lining

The classic precondition, or the precondition necessary for a silver lining, is a dark storm cloud. The phrase initially emerged in our lexicon from Milton (1634), who wrote, "Was I deceived or did a sable cloud turn forth her silver lining on the night?" The COVID-19 pandemic was comparable to a massive weather event that crossed oceans and moved through cities and states, leaving people struggling in its wake (Brunton, 2021; Lombe et al., 2021). This connects with the theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness where a life pattern characterized by chaos and disorganization is a prelude to a shift to a higher level of organization. A life-threatening diagnosis of cancer or HIV can feel like a tornado has ripped through one's life. For a silver lining to emerge, there must first be a storm. The preconditions include a traumatic event, a serious diagnosis, a chronic debilitating or life-threatening condition, or a significant loss (Harding, 2018; Lennon-Dearing, 2022; Sodergren et al., 2004). There may be tragedy, grief, or a series of unfortunate events (Drewes et al., 2021; Goyal et al., 2022; Lossio-Ventura et al., 2021). The darkness of this traumatic event, once in the foreground, shifts to the background as a surprising light illuminates a new perspective. The shadow is always present but it is now coexists with the light.

### 3.1.2. Characteristics of a silver lining

The characteristics or attributes of a silver lining were drawn from literature specifically describing the term *silver lining* and similar terms (e.g., post-traumatic growth, adversarial growth, benefit finding, and meaning making). The thematic approach to a principle-based concept analysis allows for a deeper understanding of overlapping conceptual phenomena where common themes are analyzed, and new themes are derived. Initially, an individual must notice the silver lining as it emerges from the storm cloud (Fig. 3). The individual becomes aware of the positive change only when they are ready and able to notice it (awareness). The characteristics of silver linings, outlined in Table 4 and mapped to corresponding articles, commonly fell into three categories or themes: personal, surprising, and paradoxical. The existence of a silver lining is not universally experienced or noticed. Silver linings are **personal** in that

**Table 4**

**Results of the Principle-Based Concept Analysis of Silver Lining:** Conditions, characteristics (constructs, themes, sub-themes), and outcomes extracted and used to develop the theoretical definition.

Precondition	Characteristics		Outcomes	
	Awareness	Perspective Shift		
		Themes		Sub-themes
Challenging Life Event 1–27	Personal 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27	Pattern Shifting	Spirituality 1–3, 7, 10, 11, 14–16, 20–24, 26, 27	Improved coping 1, 2, 4, 7–9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 20, 26
			Gratitude 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 26, 27	Engagement in health care 2, 11, 12, 15, 22, 24, 26
	Surprising 1, 3, 6, 9, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24		Inner strength 1, 2, 5, 7, 11, 13–18, 20–22, 24, 27	Positive impact on mental or emotional health 1, 2, 4, 5, 7–9, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27
	Paradoxical 3, 9, 11, 12, 15, 21, 24, 25	Connection	Hope 4, 7, 11, 13, 15–17, 20	Accomplish goals 8, 11, 15, 16, 21–23, 25
			Relationships 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9–11, 13–27	Acceptance of new normal 3, 4, 7, 8, 15, 19, 21, 25
			Trust 6, 11, 12, 19, 20, 27	
			Empathy 2, 4, 11, 14, 15, 21, 22, 24, 26	
		Opportunities	Social support 1, 2, 4–9, 11, 13, 15–17, 19–21, 23, 25–27	
			Life goals 8, 11, 15, 16, 21–23, 25	
			Reset priorities 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14–18, 21, 23, 27	
Altruism 4, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 25				
	Care for self and others 4, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18–23, 26			

**Note:** The numbers listed in this table correspond with the article numbers in Table 3 and indicate data supporting these themes were extracted from the articles listed here.

an individual must perceive the experience either privately or publicly. Silver linings are often **surprising**. They materialize during the darkest of times when least expected, shining light on new possibilities and opportunities for growth. They provide hope and often frame a new normal. Finally, silver linings are essentially **paradoxical** in nature, existing in the eye of the hurricane or arising in the calm after the storm. Finding meaning in difficult or traumatic situations may enhance healing and improve the ability to experience suffering and joy simultaneously.

**3.1.2.1. Themes.** The three overarching derived themes that emerged from the analysis (pattern shifting, connection, opportunities) each had four subthemes (Table 4). The complexity of this phenomenon is evident in the number of examples of silver linings. The innumerable new opportunities, connections, and patterns in life are as varied as the challenges. The studies linked to each derived subtheme are displayed in Table 4 and referenced to Table 3.

**3.1.2.2. Pattern shifting.** The authors of the selected studies described a shift in people's patterns of thought, feeling, and belief, not unlike the pattern reorganization one finds in the theory of HEC. Some saw and experienced things in a different, unexpected, or surprising way. They described a change or altered focus on **spirituality**; perhaps they became more religious or had an existential change in their lives. Others expressed **gratitude** for what they have learned, for other people, and even for the dark cloud itself. They stated that they would not choose to experience this difficult situation, but they are now grateful for the people they know, or the experiences related to the challenge. They described a sense of **inner strength** that was akin to walking through a fire to find oneself on the other side. There were discussions about surviving something unimaginable. **Hope** was used as an example of a way of appreciating silver linings that may appear in the future. When hope flourishes, it fuels other aspects of growth. For example, without hope, it is difficult to be future-minded, find connections, and work toward goals (Bennett et al., 2023).

**3.1.2.3. Connection.** Authors reported that people described feeling alone in a major life-altering event, like a new medical diagnosis. They discussed the intimate aspects of dealing with illness. Caregivers also experienced significant loneliness. Trauma alienated people and led them to state that they mistrusted others or felt they had no one to rely on. People who experienced loss or trauma needed time to find connection; however, building **relationships** with family and friends or bonding with others who had similar experiences was uplifting and supportive and provided avenues to healing. **Trust** ebbed and flowed during the challenging times, yet the negative event forged greater patient-provider trust. Trust also develops between caregivers and those they care for when experiencing crisis together. The crisis itself often reinforced **empathy** for others, and not simply those who were going through something similar, as it opened one's eyes to the various ways people suffer and experience challenges. Finally, the **social support** given and received through connections developed when experiencing crisis led to long-term healing and well-being. Newfound support was the silver lining, as some participants stated they needed to know they were not alone. Support, in person or online, created new friendships and exposed novel experiences and information that helped them manage the crisis.

**3.1.2.4. Opportunities.** Finally, through the emergence of silver linings, study participants found new opportunities to grow, change, and impact others. Many described their silver lining as developing new **life goals**. As they were no longer able to achieve accomplishments because of a drastic change, they were forced to pivot. Additionally, they **reset priorities**. After the life-altering event they experienced, previous priorities lost importance, and a new perspective brought clarity. Priorities shifted through **altruism**. People stated they wanted to give something back or help others in a time of need. They became charitable or started volunteering once they had the tools necessary to navigate the storm. They felt their crises and experiences became valuable to those just getting hit by the storm. They learned how to navigate the challenges and wanted to help others find their way. Participants said they took better **care of themselves or others**. Some described being more helpful to their family and friends to manage pain, loneliness, or loss, and some stated they were committed to improving self-care and health promotion. They were grateful for the knowledge and ability needed for tangible action in the face of a crisis.

### 3.1.3. Outcomes of a silver lining

By examining the concepts of post-traumatic growth, adversarial growth, and benefit finding, researchers have shown the positive outcomes of silver linings. These outcomes coincide with the emergence of expanding consciousness in Newman's theory of HEC. Our review revealed five overarching outcomes: **improved coping**, **engagement in health care**, **positive impacts on mental health**, the **accomplishment of goals**, and an **acceptance of a new normal**. The silver lining itself was a positive outcome in a difficult situation; however, the silver linings that emerged also led to improved health and well-being. Individuals expressed an increase in coping strategies (Aflakseir et al., 2018; Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009; Harding et al., 2014; Harding, 2018; Lennon-Dearing, 2022; Milam, 2004; Molinaro et al., 2017), enhanced quality of life (Drewes et al., 2021; Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009), improved relationships, greater appreciation for life (Hyland et al., 2006), and taking better care of themselves and others (Lombe et al., 2021; Weaver et al., 2021; Brunton, 2021), including being more engaged in and adherent to care (Rzeszutek, 2018; Yang et al., 2020).

A variety of specific outcomes were cited. Lennon-Dearing (2022), for example, described outcomes of increased sobriety, safer sex practices, and healthier life choices. Molinaro et al. (2017) found improvements in optimism, courage, and support. Decreased depression and anxiety were also reported (Sodergren et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2020; Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009). Riddell et al. (2022) examined the silver linings of the COVID-19 pandemic for executive nurses, who experienced greater connectedness and communication, deepened relationships, and amazement at what they were capable of when certain barriers were removed. Indeed, many studies described both a reprioritization and attainment of goals related to silver linings (Drewes et al., 2021; Lennon-Dearing,

2022; Rzeszutek, 2018; Sodergren and Hyland, 2000; Weaver et al., 2021).

Commonly, the silver lining was a result of a shift in priorities (Yu et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2014; Hyland et al., 2006; Lennon-Dearing, 2022; Milam, 2004; Molinaro and Fletcher, 2018). Ultimately, the challenges and positive shifts led to a new normal (Brunton, 2021; Riddell et al., 2022; Weaver et al., 2021). Findings were mixed regarding whether having a silver lining helped to build resilience (Molinaro et al., 2017; Dohrn et al., 2022) or whether resilience promoted the awareness of silver linings (Yang et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2017; Lossio-Ventura et al., 2021); therefore, we did not specify resilience as an outcome or consequence of silver linings.

#### 4. Theoretical definition

The concept of a silver lining is a familiar term understood as a bright spot on a cloudy day. In the context of illness and trauma, the concept becomes more complex and nuanced. Through this principle-based concept analysis and integrative review of the literature on silver linings and overlapping concepts, we propose a theoretical definition including preconditions, common characteristics, and subsequent outcomes:

*Silver linings are surprising shifts in personal perceptions, patterns, connections, and opportunities that paradoxically arise from life-altering or challenging circumstances. A brightened perspective illuminates the darkness of a tragic life event in a spectacular way, enhancing the awareness of spirituality, gratitude, altruism, and hope, impacting relationships, trust, empathy, and social support, leading to a change in life goals, priorities, altruism, and care for self and others. Silver linings may lead to improved coping, better physical and mental health, accomplishment of goals, and acceptance of a new normal.*

#### 5. Discussion

This principle-based analysis of the concept of silver linings generated knowledge that informed theory, inquiry and practice for nursing and other healthcare professions. First, the findings supported and enriched Newman's (1994, 2008) theory of health as expanding consciousness (HEC). In the midst of turbulent patterning that occurs with a life-altering event such as a critical illness, loss of a loved one, or situational crisis, there may be unexpected opportunities that change our lives for the better ... the silver lining. Newman (2008) draws from Ilya Prigogine's theory of dissipative structures, asserting that "a system fluctuates in an orderly manner until the occurrence of a disruptive event (internal or external), at which time the system moves in self-organizing but seemingly random disorderly ways until it chooses a new direction or a higher level of organization. This is the pathway to higher consciousness" (p. 7). Reflecting on what is most meaningful during a crisis leads to pattern recognition, the simultaneous grasping of what was, what is, and what will be possible. The term silver linings is an example of Newman's emergent awareness characterized by deeper spirituality, more empathic and trusting relationships, altruism, gratitude, hope, and love which may surface in the journey through critical life events. Fig. 4 demonstrates the connection between the model of the emergence of a silver lining to the HEC theory. These are the gifts of the silver lining—what Newman refers to as expanding consciousness. She equates expanding consciousness with

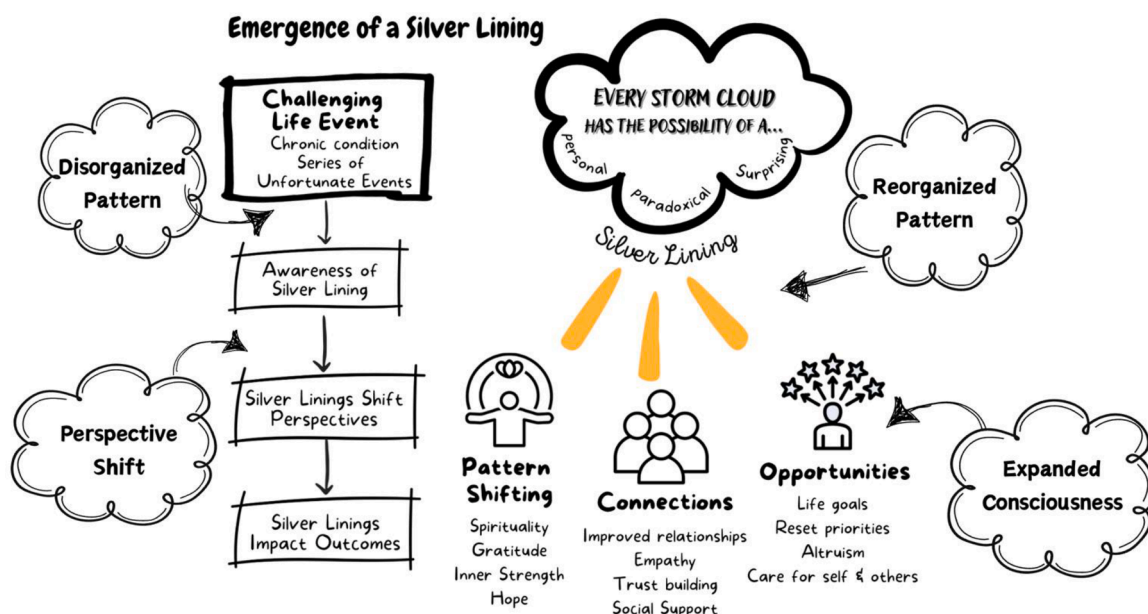


Fig. 4. Newman's theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness connected to the model of the Emergence of a Silver Lining.

Note: The key components of HEC including the introduction of a disorganized pattern, a perspective shift, a reorganized pattern followed by an expanded consciousness are depicted.



transformative life change aligned with health which underscores the outcomes of our theoretical definition of silver linings.

Our findings in this concept analysis support Newman's (1994; 2008) theoretical assertions that in the midst of experiencing chaotic, disorganized life patterning precipitated by a life-altering situation, pattern recognition creates the possibility of transformative change through the processes of pattern shifting, connections and opportunities. This concept analysis further explicated the theory of HEC by providing some concrete examples in each of those processes that provide greater substance and depth to the theory of HEC. For example, our analysis identified spirituality, gratitude, inner strength and hope as hallmarks of patterns shifting toward perceiving silver linings.

The philosophical model of the hero's journey offers another lens for understanding. Smith (2002) examined the myth of the hero's journey as it relates to the path of healing. Parallels exist between silver linings and the transformation from victim to victor, the emergence and acceptance of spiritual truths, and the shift from "suffering in brokenness to recognizing one's connectedness to the wholeness of all that is" (Smith, 2002). Smith explained that we are continuously on this journey and need both the heart and the vision of a hero facing the toughest of life's challenges. "So, the hero's journey reflects those times in our lives when we experience the rhythms of patterning as shattering, discordant, decentering—sometimes referred to as the experience of 'brokenness'" (Smith, 2002). Drawing on Newman's theory of HEC, Smith explained that these critical life-altering events create an energy that facilitates and propels a shift in patterns, the emergence of a silver lining.

This principle-based concept analysis contributed to increasing empirical and aesthetic knowing related to silver linings, post-traumatic growth, or adversarial growth. We discovered studies about the impact of being outside in nature on silver linings (Harmon, 2019). For example, camps designed for children living with chronic illness or affected by past trauma (Meltzer et al., 2018), interventions involving exercise (Rammant et al., 2018), and research on gardening (Owens et al., 2016) have all reported positive relationships with growth after trauma or challenges. Much has been written about the value of spirituality and post-traumatic growth (Harding et al., 2014; Lennon-Dearing, 2022). Trauma and illness often surface existential questions that precipitate a search for answers from spiritual or religious sources. Social support or improved relationships allow for growth in trust, community, and connectedness and often positively impact mental health (Aflakseir et al., 2018; Barskova and Oesterreich, 2009). Research supports that engagement in creative activities such as writing, drama, dance, music and visual arts promotes growth in patients with acute and chronic illness through the emergence of a silver lining (Bennett et al., 2023; Raybin et al., 2020). And finally, knowledge is a critical component of seeing the silver lining (Tedeschi, 2023). Understanding the disease or trauma and its potential impact may illuminate a silver lining.

The findings of this analysis culminated in an aesthetic re-presentation in a conceptual model that invited a metaphorical understanding of the phenomenon. In our conceptual model (Fig. 3), the kite contains five concepts related to the cultivation of silver linings described in this review. The kite is a metaphor, symbolic of an activity done on a windy day. The one flying the kite engages with the turbulence of the environment to lift the kite ... to make it fly. Flying the kite requires awareness and sensitivity to the prevailing winds. The activity has the potential to bring joy or connection with others. This model can be helpful for guiding nursing practice and fostering the awareness of silver linings.

Through a rigorous process of reviewing and analyzing the quality of the literature on the phenomenon, our research team was able to identify common themes, clarifying the meaning of silver linings. This process of principle-based concept analysis is very different than more prevalent models such as Wilson (Avant, 2000) and Rodgers (2000). This concept analysis requires documentation of an exhaustive review of literature and painstaking analysis of quality that yields a broader, richer and more substantive understanding of the concept. One unexpected advantage to our analysis was the representation of literature from 19 different countries providing a rare global perspective that was facilitated by the scope of the analysis.

More research is needed to further describe silver linings, to test whether an awareness impacts health outcomes and well-being, and to develop interventions or strategies that may enhance silver linings in the face of adversity.

The knowledge generated from this principle-based concept analysis has implications for theory-guided, evidence-based practice. Healthcare providers routinely care for patients who are experiencing life-altering events such as receiving a serious diagnosis, living with a disabling chronic illness, loss of a loved one, family crises, homelessness and other economic hardships. Understanding the nature of silver linings within a theoretical framework such as HEC invites an openness to possibilities that can emerge during the most difficult times. Of course, healthcare providers need to be sensitive to what the patient/family is experiencing, inviting expressions of thoughts and feelings during critical life situations, exploring the meaning of the situation to them, and attending to what is most important to them. However, knowing about the nature of silver linings provides hope, and opens the door for exploring the new patterning that might emerge when the individual is ready.

Nurses and other healthcare providers might introduce the idea of silver linings when speaking with patients to foster awareness of positive changes related to difficult experiences. Examples of specific evidence-based interventions related to finding/experiencing silver linings include exploring and connecting with nature; pursuing forms of creative expression in the form of music, dance, writing, or art; mindfulness-based practices, searching for knowledge; sharing knowledge and experiences to help others such as joining a support group, developing a website or podcast. Nurses can proactively discuss what gives meaning and purpose with the question, "What matters most to you?". This is an opening to explore spirituality, meaningful relationships, and support systems to help patients notice a silver lining during a critical life situation.

### 5.1. Limitations

A large number of citations of *silver linings* in recent years did not offer a definition or characteristics of the concept, therefore a saturation method to select studies to diversify the sample with rigorous documentation was used. Inclusion of similar overarching

concepts used to describe silver linings may have broadened the true definition of silver linings, although we purposefully included a heterogeneous sample from numerous countries to find the commonalities in silver linings between multiple cultures. Despite the limitations of describing metaphors in an attempt to merge science, language, and art, this process allowed for a deeper understanding of important contemporary healthcare concepts (Chinn et al., 2022).

## 6. Conclusion

Colloquial metaphors are used in research and clinical care to build rapport, create trust, and exhibit understanding, however they are not scientifically defined, and therefore are difficult constructs to study. Through this concept analysis, we attempted to add rigor to the phrase, *silver linings*, for clinicians and researchers to use in examinations and discussions of hope and finding solace when faced with adversity. More research is needed to understand silver linings, including how the concept may be described among people from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and whether similar terms exist in different languages and cultures. This principle-based concept analysis produced a theoretically grounded conceptual definition that may be used in both clinical care and research to support patients and participants weathering storms and experiencing or searching for the emergence of a silver lining.

"When it occurs, it illuminates the possibilities for action. It is like the difference between being in the dark and turning on the light: when the light comes on, one can see the possibilities for movement" (Newman, 1990, p.40).

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## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Emily Anne Barr:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Jennifer L. Raybin:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **C. Robert Bennett:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Marlaine C. Smith:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis.

## Declaration of competing interest

We, the above authors, declare that we have no financial or personal relationships that could have inappropriately influenced the design, conduct, analysis, or presentation of this work.

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