



Only Change not Time Does Heal: A Study of Trauma in *The Choice* by Edith Eva Eger

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Abstract

Time is a function of memory. Memory allows one to retain happiness, grief, worry, despair, and associations from one's life experience. Edith Eger, a Holocaust survivor, successfully weaves her life through the Holocaust. She was worried and wished for death after being estranged from her parents and relationships in Auschwitz. It is catastrophic for Eger, but she moulded all those distracting memories into a tool to help her live and provide future generations choice, especially those who have suffered from PTSD like her. Hence, through the eyes of Eger, this article aims to teach readers how to escape the prisons of their own thoughts and trauma to attain liberation. The research paper guides readers, the traumatic experiences of the writer, following WWI, which serves as the core topic of this analysis and inhibits Edith Eger's optimistic attitude to time and change. With a concluding note of empathy, the study finds that time does not heal the scars; instead of waiting for the perfect time, one can decide to move on better since everyone can live to enrich the present.

Keywords: change, time, heal, choice, trauma, holocaust and empathy

Introduction

Time is a pivotal element of human existence. Without time, human life could not be imagined. In every aspect of life, the human approach and their dependence on time play a prominent role, it consists of the sequence of events. Since the beginning of the universe, the concept of time has been questioned. Science, philosophy, religion, and the arts have had different kinds of definitions over time. But the system of measuring time is consistent in all fields. It also helps to understand history and its impact on present society.

According to archaeological evidence, the Babylonians and Egyptians began to measure time at least 5,000 years ago, introducing calendars to organise and coordinate communal activities and public events, schedule the shipment of goods, and in particular, regulate cycles of planting and harvesting.

Scientists define time as "the progression of events from the past into the future. In math, time can be defined as "an ongoing and continuous sequence of events that occur in succession, from the past through the present and to the future. From this perspective, time is used to quantify, measure, or compare the duration of events or the intervals between them, and even to sequence events.

From classical time to Albert Einstein, time can be considered a significant part of human life, counting its routines like minutes and hours and planning each second. Time has its own structure; whether we touch or hear, we can experience ups and downs in our lives through the peculiarities of time. The Christian philosopher Saint Augustin believed time "was not absolutely infinite. It is God's creation and it would be impossible to create infinite."

God has created the universe and has a splendid plan for each individual and the events to be taken for them in this universe. The Holy Bible says:

To everything there is a reason, and time to every purpose under the heavens. A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build... A time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace (Society, 1987)



Hence, throughout history, the notion of time has been present in every action of our lives, and its meanings seem obvious. It is possible that memory formation is the basis for human perception of time. If the memory haunts a person, he or she will not be able to move forward. Zinging in time is not a productive method, but holding hope for the future with the help of determination can raise people out of a traumatic atmosphere.

The objectives of the study

1. To find the cause of trauma and the significance of time in Eger's life.
2. To investigate the involuntary changes trauma inflicts on an individual's life,
3. To expose the discovery of self-esteem and self-confidence through the power of change.
4. To explain the new coping mechanisms and the healthier behaviours to choose the liberty of one's inner heart.

Research Questions:

1. What are the implications of trauma and the time of transformation?
2. Does humanity need awareness of choice to eradicate PTSD?
3. What was the striving mantra of Edith Eger in her Holocaust days?

Research Methodology

This article employs Cathy Caruth's traumatic theory to investigate the causes and burdens of trauma during people's worst hours. The research paper also discusses Edith Eva Eger's thought patterns throughout the Holocaust and her desire for life, with humanity as the backdrop. The research article ensures its values of love and compassion by including Eger's surviving motto through the insight of choosing the best.

Hypothesis

What are the impacts of trauma? Is it really true that time moves the life of a trauma survivor better? Based on the traumatic journey and personal experience of Edith Eger, the research article tries to maintain the conviction that time alone does not heal anybody. The book delves into Eger's journey of healing and the choices she made to overcome the traumatic scars for herself and her fellow beings as a renowned PTSD specialist. If people tend to forget the harms and hurts of the past, then they can engage in constant decision-making and take control of their own lives. Healing from trauma is not a passive process that occurs over time but an active journey to creating better change. So that they can design their lives as they wish.

The uniqueness of the paper

In the context of time, this research study tackles an anchoring exploration of humanity against the backdrop of World War II. Weaving together the personal accounts of Edith Eger in the Holocaust and her healing process, dealing with trauma and the concept of time, the narrative portrays the delicate progression of healing and change. It exhibits awareness of life choices and the development of power in both individuals and society.

Understanding Time

Time is a tool to enhance the memory of the past and an evident indicator of the present's progress and the foreseen future. Time moves only in one direction. It is possible to move forward in time, but not backward. Scientists believe memory formation is the basis for human perception of time.

Authors, philosophers, and artists reflect on time from their own perspectives. There are many types of time, and each of them has different reflections on individual and collective existence. Apart from chronological time, historical time, and psychological time, it should consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in the English language. The Cambridge Dictionary says that "time is a part of existence counted in minutes, hours, years, etc., or a period in history."



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When time counts like its definition, it might be a boon or a curse for someone to be unhuman in such a way, as Dr. Edith Eva Eger was in Auschwitz at the beginning of World War II. Unlike her, time does not heal for her, it causes the pain and may adapt its features to the physical and spiritual attitudes of the people at the same time. Through her memoir *The Choice*, Edith shares her own sense of time, which made it easy for her to turn the curse into a choice and the curse into a boon. She does not wait for the right time to come to rescue her life; as an alternative, she has counted her days with the hope that can only be possible in her imagination. She imagines the moment she expects with a complete sense of gratification. She knows the effective root of thoughts, which glide and travel through the inner feelings of a person and put forth effects according to their emotional pattern. One can understand it by:

its liberation from the inhibiting categories of thought, it gains greater flexibility and agility, and it indulges in pleasurable turns. It is excessively sensitive to the delicate emotional stimuli of the mind, to its stirring and disturbing affects, and it rapidly recasts the inner life into an external, practical visibility. (Freud, 1911)

The emotion one can have completely depends on his thoughts. Thought of his inner sense. Most commonly, people are always concerned with building a happy life. Adam Grant rightly says that When we're searching for happiness, we get too busy evaluating life to actually experience it. We spend too much time striving for peak happiness, overlooking the fact that happiness depends more on the frequency of positive emotions than their intensity. "When we hunt for happiness, we overemphasise pleasure at the expense of purpose" (238).

Everything that happens in this world has a special purpose. Life is also not excluded from that notion. From the classical to Albert Einstein periods, time can be considered a significant part of human life, counting its routines like minutes and hours and planning each second. Saint Augustin believes the time "was not absolutely infinite. It is God's creation and would be impossible to create infinite" (2017). God has created the universe and has a splendid plan for each individual and the events to be taken for them in this universe. *The Holy Bible* says:

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The passage of time and its impact on Eger's journey are two of the factors examined in the paper. Throughout the memoir *The Choice*, Eger reflects on various periods and stages in her life, emphasising the significance of individual occasions in Auschwitz during the beginning of the Second World War.

Eger shares her own sense of time, which could make it easy for her to turn the curse into a choice and the curse into a boon. She does not wait for the right time to come to salvage her life; as an alternative, she has counted her days with the hope that can only be possible in her imagination. She imagines the moment she expects with a complete sense of gratification. The sequence of events, from her tragic experiences in concentration camps to her present-day life, provides insights about the healing and transformation process.

Psychological impact of trauma

The traumatic events endured during the Holocaust had profound psychological impacts on Eger and countless others. The term trauma, derived from the Greek word for "wound," reflects the deep emotional and psychological wounds inflicted during such haunting experiences. Eger's memoir provides a window into the psychological imbalances that occur as a result of trauma, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other psychological challenges faced by survivors.



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The Holocaust is one of the examples of trauma in history that gave birth to PTSD during and after World War II.

Harbouring the past, negative emotions, imprisoning beliefs, unrepresentable sufferings, and atrocities of Shao are some of the factors of trauma that develop stress. Spiegel describes it as “a loss of control over one’s body”. But Eger eventually had a keen eye for her life after Shao. She conveys that “the little upsets in our lives are emblematic of the larger losses; the seemingly insignificant worries are representative of greater pain” (9). The barren experience of Eger sheds immediate tears in the eyes of readers, imagine how terrible she lives in that?

Cathy Caruth writes “The grief aroused by an external source impels internal changes in the mind and thus irreversibly changes one’s identity” (84). It represents separation and negative consequences in a person’s life. Eger’s desperation to live and show her identity in the midst of the struggle drives her to the profession of physician and brings many back to life. It raises the possibility of dealing with this study in the field of trauma. Because “pursuing happiness is not the ultimate desire of life, but having breath is the sole desire of human life” (Frankl, 1985). Surviving itself is a big threat to Holocaust survivors.

Nearly twelve thousand Jews imprisoned in the brick factory will sleep without a roof over their heads. Nazi soldiers beat up people with rubber truncheons at the centre of the camp. Eger’s entire family barely survives for a few days. When a girl in the camp tries to run, the soldiers hang her body in the middle of the camp. She remembers that:

There is one loaf of bread for eight people to share. One bucket of water. One bucket for our bodily waste It smells of sweat and excrement. People die along the way. We all sleep upright, leaning against our family members and setting aside the dead. (43)

The horrible acts had no effect on their determination to live. Their parents and siblings had died right in front of their eyes. “We were cold and hungry, and there was not enough room for everyone to squat on the bare ground” (Frankl, 1985). Viktor Frankl recounts his horrible Holocaust experience. Eger sees this as a test and recalls a survival mantra her mother gave her: “There is always a worse hell” (65). However, people should remember that “every moment is a choice. We may always choose how we respond to our circumstances, no matter how tedious, dull, confining, hurtful, or oppressive they are” (156).

From the above note, the readers realised that she starts to respond to her thoughts and feed her imagination by thinking about the positive, pleasant moments with her loved ones. Over time, she was rescued from the heap of dead bodies and found to be nearly dead. The progression of events, from her traumatic experiences in concentration camps to her present-day life, offers insights into the process of healing and transformation.

Change: The need of the hour

Change is the only thing that should not be changed in the universe. Change is inevitable in human society in order to maintain the dignity of human life. Basically, the change must start with every individual—those who understand the transience of time and space. Individual change can be initiated by one’s behavior. Eger extended that, “to change our behaviour, we must change our feelings, and to change our feelings, we change our thoughts” (171). For Eger, it is clear that the thought pattern speaks a lot about change. It turns her life upside down when she understands the system is unchanging. It is rigid and constrained by the bounds of timelessness. Eger could not wait for the perfect time. Because she realises from the wound of hollow experience that:

Time doesn’t heal. It’s what you do with the time. Healing is possible when we choose to take responsibility, when we choose to take risks, and finally, when we choose to release the wound, to let go of the past or the grief” (263).



Time can be considered a tool for change because it might be a dimension of reality. Realistic events run on the basis of time. If one is ever ready to change, he or she should be ready to take risks, this risk factor will show the determination of the person who wants to change. It will automatically reflect a deeper understanding of his own capabilities, values, and goals” (174). Hence, for a transformation from the old, dull, traumatic irony of this precious life, one needs to change anyway.

Transformation: A Note of Healing

There are plenty of choices in life. It is our responsibility to select how we will react or respond: “I can be miserable, or hopeful—I can be depressed, or I can be happy” (n.p.). Through thought patterns, one can change a chaotic event into the happiest moment

When people express their emotions rather than bottle them up, transformation is possible. It should not originate from the question “Why me?!” Instead, it should come from the question “Why not me?” (260) In Edith’s opinion, forgiveness is something sacred that can heal a broken life. She used to argue that if one desires dignity and independence, he can learn to forgive and move on from pain. A wounded soul could never be supported by holding on to the agony and anguish of the past. If you want to break free from a repressive way of life, Edith suggests starting with “the prison of our own mind, where we learned to heal from the wounds of the past” (212). By doing so, one can shift oneself out of trauma and make his mind a fresh and free vessel of delight.

As a result, from the state of ‘victimisation’ (from without), one can progress to ‘victimhood’ (from within). Freedom is not a bitter fruit; it can bring about healing and growth. Prefer to make a sensible decision where one can find inner liberation. “Freedom is all about choice: choosing compassion, humour, optimism, intuition, curiosity, and self-expression” (173). Despite the indelible scars left by trauma, Eger’s narrative reveals the wounded psyche’s transformative capacity for healing.

The novel *The Choice* by Edith Eva Eger shows the complex interplay of time, trauma, and transformation. It is acceptable to run the risk of being vulnerable because everything is fleeting. “There’s the wound. And then there’s the what comes out of it” (269). Understanding these aspects of time and healing allows readers to get a greater appreciation for the human spirit’s persistence, as well as the possibilities of growth and transformation in the face of sorrow and suffering. If a person truly wishes to transform, he or she must “let go of the past and grief” (263).

Findings

By exploring her own journey of self-discovery and growth, Eger offers hope and inspiration to readers. The healing process encompasses various elements, including therapy, resilience, support systems, and personal introspection. Through her narrative, Eger demonstrates that healing is a multifaceted process that requires time, self-reflection, and a willingness to confront past traumas. By understanding the change, one can transform a very hard level of breakage.

Scope for further extension

Investigate the concepts of resilience and post-traumatic growth by analysing the experiences of survivors of various traumatic events, such as natural disasters or war. The effectiveness of narrative therapy in the treatment of trauma can also be studied in depth. Analysing the function of mindfulness-based approaches in trauma recovery could be a vibrant area of theoretical research with the goal of improving overall well-being.

Conclusion

Eger highlights the significance of time in the context of love and relationships through the line, “I never look at the clock. Love is a four-letter word spelled time (176). If you feed your soul with love, there is no need for a clock. This article investigates the relationship between time and love, underlining the importance of investing time in meaningful interactions and connections with others in order to create love, empathy, and positive ideas. It highlights the importance of quality time in



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developing and maintaining successful relationships, as well as how time management affects emotional well-being.

Love, as defined by empathy and positive thoughts can serve as a catalyst for healing and transformation in traumatised individuals. “Love that endures all things in the world” (2023) with empathy and with positive thoughts. It explores the power of love to foster resilience and create a supportive environment that facilitates the healing process. Eger’s mother says to her, “No one can take away from you what you’ve put in your mind” (271). This must be the power she needs to change her life and heal others.

According to Bradshaw, “you cannot heal what you cannot feel” (Bradshaw, 1992). One cannot be a healing agent to promote the betterment of human journeys unless one empathises. There is a strong connection between time and change. Both are the agents of transience of life, means the life in the world is temporary. Anyone can be free of personal barriers and discover happiness by using numerous ways of emotional healing such as counselling, mindful practices, self-reflection and reclaim the joy of life in the mortal world.

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