Amy Morin:

Welcome to The Verywell Mind Podcast! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a bestselling author of four books on mental strength. Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys! Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week. Now, let's dive into today's episode!

Today, we have a really special show. I'm talking to Dr. Edith Eger. She's a psychologist and a Holocaust survivor. She's joined by her daughter, Marianne Engle, who is also a psychologist. In 1944, when Dr. Eger was just a teenager, she and her family were sent to Auschwitz. Dr. Eger and her sister both survived the death camp, but their parents didn't. After the war, Dr. Eger got married and moved to the United States. She got her degree in psychology and started treating people who had PTSD, but she realized that she hadn't yet worked through her own trauma. And she set out to begin healing herself.

She's since written two books. The first one was called The Choice, in which she describes how she survived the Holocaust. Her most recent book is called The Gift. In this book, she describes how she escaped the prison in her own mind. In the newest
edition of the book, her daughter, Dr. Engle, contributes to it as well. And she's joining us in this conversation today. Some of the things we talk about are the lessons Dr. Eger learned from her suffering, the things that helped her heal, and why she's so passionate about helping other people. Make sure to stick around for The Therapist's Take. It's the part of the episode where I'll give you my take on some of Dr. Eger's strategies for building mental strength and talk about how you can apply them to your own life.

So here's Dr. Edith Eger and her daughter, Dr. Marianne Engle, on the strategies that can help you heal and become more resilient.

Amy Morin:
Dr. Eger and Dr. Engle, welcome to The Verywell Mind Podcast!

I read a lot of books, both for fun, and I read lots of books because we interview cool people on this show. I have a copy of The Gift right here, and it is by far, the best book I have ever read. It's an amazing book. And I'm so grateful that I had the opportunity to read it. And then I have the opportunity to speak to you. I think you gave us an amazing gift by writing it and the stories that you share and the way that you simplify all of these lessons.

Edith Eger:
I was lecturing to the Harvard graduates last night and I knew I was going to talk to you, but I remember when my daughter was at Harvard, one of their famous professors, McClelland said, "What are you going to do with your PhD? Are you going to put it on your washing machine?"

Marianne Engle:
Right. He did McClelland. Yep.

Edith Eger:
I never forgot that. We have changed, thank God.

Amy Morin:
Yes. And some of the many amazing things about you, but how old were you when you wrote this book?

Edith Eger:
Oh, I was 92. 92.

Amy Morin:
And you wrote your first book at what age?

Edith Eger:
Late 80s.

Amy Morin:
So for a lot of people who say it's too late, you're proof that it's not. We can do anything at any age. Right?

Edith Eger:
I know I said that to many years, people asked me to write a book and I would say, "I have nothing to say. I have nothing to say," but thank God, Philip Zimbardo called one morning and told me that people who survived and famous, are all men. And he's asking me to recognize that it's time for a female voice. So the choice is really the female voice of Victor Franco, but I'm not Victor Franco because he was in his studies. He was an MD. He had very difficult way of thinking. Then, I was 16 and I was in love. And we were exchanging ways that we were able to check out. And he told me that he checked out and pretended that he was in a Vietnamese home lecturing about concentration camp. And I said to him, "That's interesting because I too closed my eyes. And the music was Tchaikovsky and I was dancing the Romeo and Juliet and [foreign language 00:04:58] to a very elegant audience.

Amy Morin:
And one of the powerful things you talk about is once you move to America and you were physically free, you weren't actually free yet. Can you explain that?

Edith Eger:
I think freedom has another [inaudible 00:05:16], freedom from. And I like people to pay attention to our talk this morning and see where they are, because in my opinion, there are no problems, there only challenges. There are no crises. There are only transitions. And I was interviewed the other day, by a woman who is writing a book on midlife. And so, I think she's going to do a great job, not to think about crises. They can't have any children, but who want some anyway by then?

Amy Morin:
It took you a long time to... You became a psychologist, but it took a long time to get there. And you said, even though you were treating other people, there was a point where you thought you hadn't really worked on yourself yet, right?

Edith Eger:
Right. I was beginning to speak about PTSD, not realizing that I really wasn't qualified because I couldn't take people further than I have gone myself. And so I decided to go back to our trip. And that's how I really created my own way of working, which has to do with three phases. Is it has to do with grieving, feeling and healing. You can't heal what you don't feel. So crying is good. What comes after your body will never make you heal, but stays in there. And I remember I had a lot of stomach problems. I had colon is what's called. And the doctor took care of me because I just wanted to be a Yankee Doodle Dandy when I came to America and I never wanted to have anyone, any idea that my children were different from other children. I just wanted to assimilate.

Amy Morin:
So speaking of children, I was just going to say, Dr. Engle growing up, when did you learn your mother's story?

Marianne Engle:
Well, my sister and I were just talking about this the other day. I didn't know, learn the story. I'm a big reader. And when I was a kid, I read all the time. I read everything in the El Paso Public Library, the kid section, I read the whole thing. So I started in the grown up section and my parents were readers. So I would go through their books. And one day I was looking and there was behind the books, there was another book and I pulled that book out and it was the most disgusting, frightening book I'd ever seen.

And it was a book about Auschwitz and there was just one picture after another of the bodies and all this stuff. And, oh, I'm sorry. Makes you sad.

Edith Eger:
It's okay.

Marianne Engle:
So I said to my father, I mean, finally, I looked at that. I think I was 12. I looked at that and suddenly things made sense to me because I knew my mother had some fears. I knew there was some... My father always wanted to protect her. My mother's the sweetest person ever, but there were also things that would affect her and I didn't understand it. And-

Edith Eger:
I think your father told you when I bought you a beautiful orange silk dress, so you could go to your dance and guess what? The father tells her? "Go, honey, have a good time. Your mother was in Auschwitz when she was your age."

Marianne Engle:
Oh. And her parents were dead. But that was a few years later.

Edith Eger:
I don't... I know him.

Marianne Engle:
I know. But back to your question. So that's when I figured it out. And the thing my sister and I were talking about is that, the treasure of not knowing so much when I was growing up, was that even though I knew that she had pain and I wanted to help protect her and make her proud, make her happy, all these things, which is pretty normal for children anyway, but I wasn't affected all the time. Whereas a lot of survivors' children that I've met now, especially having moved to New York is the conversations at home were so much about, the war and what happened to me and da, da, da, da. And I didn't have to grow up with that, which I have to say I'm extremely grateful for, but that's when I found out.

And the other thing I want to say, and then I'll let you talk. Is that when my mother went to Auschwitz and came back, she became a different person. There had always been a little bit of pain in her eyes. And I knew her parents were dead because I grew up without grandparents. And I knew they had died in the war, but I didn't really know all the details of anything. And when she came back from Auschwitz, that was gone.

Amy Morin:
You're talking about when she went back to visit right? As in much later in life?

Marianne Engle:
Mm-hmm (affirmative). When she went back and she figured out that she had to figure out her own post-traumatic stress, that she had it and she needed to go figure it out. And it made all the difference. So the person you see today, is that person. I mean, she carries obviously, a lot of the pain still. Again, that doesn't go away, but she could become the incredible person that she is now and help the world, which, we're all so proud of her and happy for that. Okay.

Edith Eger:
I would like to say that, there are two questions I’d like you to reconsider. And one of them really applies to the children of survivors and the question is, when did your childhood end?

Amy Morin:
Mm.

Edith Eger:
Because you get, I call it parent touched. You end up taking care of your parents. And I can tell you, that is the fact because you don’t know about it and you don’t even know that you are just really being robbed. You feel good bringing home peanut butter and tuna fish that we never saw. And tell me how I have to get a turkey for Thanksgiving. And she was American [inaudible 00:12:01] and the parents were relying and dependent on the child to tell them how...

I remember my husband didn't know how to pronounce Connecticut. And he would go Connectitut.

Marianne Engle:
Connectitut.

Edith Eger:
Connectitut. So, I think that is a different... And then you go to school and I'm going to book my patient. And he said that, when he went to school, his friend had a white bread, wonder bread and on mayonnaise and baloney and he had a [inaudible 00:12:56] with roast beef and he came home and he told the parents, "I want to have wonder bread. I want to have baloney because he didn't want to be different.

Amy Morin:
Yeah. I think that's something all of us go through as teenagers, you want to fit in. But then we have normal teenage problems. Dr. Engle, how did you handle that as a teenager? When you thought, "Oh, I'm going to complain, because I have too much homework," or complain about everyday things without that guilt of, or maybe you had that guilt of thinking, "My goodness, what my mom went through when she was my age."

Edith Eger:
Can I answer it please?

Amy Morin:
Sure.

Edith Eger:
When my little girl was about six years old, she said, "Everybody has a sister and I have to have a sister." And she kept saying long enough until we decided that if we make $60, somehow we can afford to pay the doctor because we never owed any money to anyone. And soon enough, we had the little girl, her name is Audrey. And that was so important. But you see what happened, that she became a little mother to her sister. And so the two question is, when did your child to end? And the second question is, would you like to be married to you? And so, because my husband and I, coming to America, I started work in a factory and he ended up becoming a CPA. But how did she feel as a teenager? Now, she's going to tell you.

Marianne Engle:
So it's so interesting when I hear my mother talk about her perception of me as a child being the entry into America. So my father had gone to boarding school in London and he did speak English and my mother was learning English. They were a lot of fun as parents. We would do things together. My mother was always dancing around and-

Edith Eger:
We saw the red shoes.

Marianne Engle:
We saw the yeah, the red shoes. I was never ignored as a child. And for some reason this incredible school asked me if I wanted ask them if they could have me for free. So they dropped me off. I was the first kid dropped off and the last one picked up. Well, I loved it, loved it. So I mean, I have such lovely memories of my childhood, frankly. And also, the feeling that I had was that, we were in it together. And so for me, I have a very different history than my sister and my brother and my own children. And I don't feel badly one second about it. I liked it. I loved it. As a teenager, it was a little different because at that point I was a pretty independent thinking kid, even though, I was a good kid to my parents and all this stuff, and-

Edith Eger:
She ran for president.

Marianne Engle:
Yeah. And so, I know. In Texas, you could get your license at 14, if your parents would sign for it in those days. So I did. So I had my license so early and I skipped some grades because I was a smart kid and I was in a special program. So I just felt like... I
grew up in El Paso, which I loved my friends, but I was ready to get out of Texas. So how I felt as a teenager is, I was going to work really hard. I did a lot of fun things. I was good at a lot of stuff and I was going to get out and that's what I did.

Edith Eger:
I also [inaudible 00:17:02] rich kids who lived down the road and I found out they were wearing Pendelton skirts. And I remember I wanted my girl looking just like those rich kids and yeah. Saved up to buy Pendelton skirt, so she would not look different. I was very anxious to fit in and blend in.

Marianne Engle:
But what's interesting is that I've remained good friends with my classmates, from El Paso. And now that my mother has become such a well thought of writer and all this, whenever I see them or talk to them, they always remind me of how much they loved my mother, that she was able to relate to them in a way that their parents didn't and she cared about them. And so, I think this sweetness that she has has been always there.

Amy Morin:
I can imagine. And I'd love to go back to something you said a few minutes ago, Dr. Eger because I think it was a really powerful part of your book. When you encourage people to ask that question, would you like to be married to you? Very simple, but easy way to figure out gee, if I want to improve my relationship, what do I need to do differently?

Edith Eger:
Don't ask how are you? And don't say, why don't you? Because we mothers ask questions and give advice. I think it's better to say, I used to ask my patients, "How are you?" And they would say, "Fine." And I knew they were suicidal. So the next time they came, I said, "Gee, it's good to see you. I missed you."

Amy Morin:
Yeah. What a powerful thing. Because we do ask that question all the time, "How are you?" And people say, "Fine," because it's just ingrained in us to answer that question that way.

Edith Eger:
I think it's better to create an atmosphere. And we, women, are very good at that. That people can feel free to feel any feelings. And I did have a 14 year old who told me that his first goal is to kill all the Jewish people.
Amy Morin:
Right?

Edith Eger:
And I told him, “Tell me more.” I never told him, “You stupid idiot, my mother was going to the gas chamber.” I did not do that. And this is it, even today. I hope to be a good teacher. How to be a passionate, very compassionate listener.

Amy Morin:
But you certainly are. And your book again, has reached so many people, I have no doubt. Another interesting point I thought in your book is when you talk a lot about the opposite of depression is expression. Can you explain that a little more?

Edith Eger:
Yeah. My precious daughter calls it ED-ism. The other one is are you revolving or are you evolving? So that would be the other one. But what comes out of your body will not make you ill, what stays in there does. And that's why I know I'm asking people to stop and think and listen to their inner voices and when did your childhood end? And if immigrants child really is actually proud that they can take care of their parents, they don't feel abused. And I think we need to just say, “Thank you,” to the children. And now, I'm going to hopefully be a woman to a woman and you have your life. And I have my life. I will not ask you any personal question, what you do with your husband. We respect each other's privacy. And I think respect is more important than anything else.

Amy Morin:
I think so too. And then I'm glad you said the word hope, because that was another chapter in your book. Is you talk about the importance of hopelessness. One of the parts I like too is you said don't confuse being hopeful with being idealistic. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Edith Eger:
Yes, because people who are idealistic and they cannot find what they're looking for, I see them becoming very sarcastic and they're-

Marianne Engle:
And angry and depressed.

Edith Eger:
And exactly.
Marianne Engle:
Yeah. Yeah.

Edith Eger:
So it's better to be realistic. And my daughter is very clear about it. That she said, "It's okay to dream, but don't confuse idealism, realism, and all has to do with your expectations."

Amy Morin:
How about right now, at the end of the pandemic? Hopefully it's winding down, but I hear so many people say things like, "The world is an awful place." How do people who feel like that find hope?

Marianne Engle:
I want to answer that first. And then my mom can do it. I don't know if you have children, but I can tell you that many, many, many people with children are suffering. The kids have had a lot of issues about their schoolwork, about their friendships back and forth, back and forth, their activities. Sometimes it's on, sometimes it's off, we're in the middle right now of a revival, a little bit of the pandemic and you hear those stories and I'm watching my patients, I'm watching other people and there's, behind their face. There's the panic again. "Oh my God, where's this going?"

And I think we are going through a very difficult time. Everyone is. But on the other hand, we're spending more time with family. We are spending more time with short bursts of a few friends and there's a lot of time to actually sit and get new things done that you might not have done before. So people are doing projects that they hadn't done or they pick up new ideas or they're just sitting around. And sometimes, it's nice just to sit around and not have 14 things that you're racing off to do. So I think it's been a dualistic situation, but I think we're all ready to move back away from the fear side of it.

Go ahead mum.

Edith Eger:
Auschwitz was hell. I was told every day, the only way I will get out here is a corpse. They took my blood and I asked, "Why are you taking my blood?" And I was told that my blood is going to be used to aid the German soldiers so we can win the war and take over the world, especially America. I could not yank my arm away, but I said to myself, "With my blood, you're never going to be in the war." What's the matter with me? I was a student of ballet. So there is a difference between reacting or responding. So I teach people how to respond. And when someone tells you anything that is possibly
derogatory and you take a deep breath and say, "Thank you for your opinion." I say a lot of thank yous.

Amy Morin:
I love that. It's hard to do, but it certainly makes a big difference. And something else that I was hearing early on in the pandemic, is parents saying things to their kids. Like if this is the worst thing that happens to you, you can't go to school. It's not that bad and minimizing it. And one of the things I really appreciated about your book, was that you talked a lot about how we shouldn't do that. We shouldn't say, "Well, my problems aren't as bad as Dr. Eger's. I never went through that. My problems aren't as bad as so and so's, so I shouldn't feel bad." You tell us not to do that though.

Edith Eger:
I think it's very important to be realistic. And for parents not to use defense mechanism and you just mentioned them minimizing, denying, I don't think that's important. I think children know better and they would respect when their mother would say, "I wish I knew, because I really don't and hopefully we can work together. We can cooperate." Not dominate or compete. And because this is a good time to look at the family dynamics. Are you a first born, the middle child or a baby in the family?

Amy Morin:
I am the baby in the family. There's only two of us. I have an older sister.

Edith Eger:
Nice. Do you know how we call you? Charming manipulators.

Amy Morin:
Ah. Why is that?

Edith Eger:
I was one.

Amy Morin:
Yeah.

Edith Eger:
So I know. I would go to my father and ask for money when he was playing billiards because I knew he was going to give me [inaudible 00:26:57]. My mother would never buy any of that and that.
Amy Morin:
Right, that's the joy of being the baby of the family. Absolutely.

Marianne Engle:
Totally. I want to just say one thing to your listeners, which is that, this is from my child psychology role. When a child says to you, "But I can't go to school." Or when I think, all these things that have been happening, or "I can't do this, I can't do that." Or, "I'm not invited to a birthday party." It is so important to acknowledge that you hear what they say. You don't have to feel sorry for them. You don't have to apologize, but you need to make them feel that you heard it.

And you could also say certainly around the COVID things is, "This is really a weird time. Do you know this happened 100 years ago?" because it did. "And did you know 100 years ago, the kids couldn't go to school and everyone wore masks?" And that's true. And I think then, it's not like this has never happened before and people didn't survive. This has happened before. It's weird. We have to figure this out. We'll all do it together. And we're going to feel sad about some of the things. So let's figure out some things that'll make us happy that we got to do during COVID.

Edith Eger:
Wonderful to write rules. I like to write something for the family that there is no freedom without responsibility, it's anarchy. So we don't talk about punishment in this family. We only talk about consequences. It's called assertive discipline because you chose it. See, I am a teacher and you are doing something that I'm not able to really teach as well, I would come to you. And I could say, "I see that you choose to leave the class. So because I'm here paid to really teach this class, and when you make noises like that, and there is no punishment of any kind, it's a consequence."

Amy Morin:
I like that.

Edith Eger:
I don't want yes, but. I like to take the but and I give you an and. I hope your mother didn't tell you, you're a beautiful girl, but we got to talk about your weight or your pimples or God knows what, I like to take away and exchange it, to yes, and.

Amy Morin:
Makes sense. Can we talk about one more thing before we go? I just want to touch on the subject of PTSD. You mentioned earlier, Dr. Engle, that Dr. Eger went over to Auschwitz as part of her healing process, but your sister chose not to go. Right?
Edith Eger:
Right.

Marianne Engle:
Right.

Edith Eger:
My sister told me I was an idiot. And so, I didn't ask her the second time. I don't think I ever mentioned it to her. And she just ran away from that past and never, ever mentioned it. And I never brought it up either. My sister had her 100th birthday in this January 23rd. And she tells you that she's 99. I [inaudible 00:30:51] figure that out, how one year can make a difference.

Amy Morin:
Wow. So for somebody out there who may have gone through something traumatic, what's your advice on how they discover their own path to healing? Because we know people heal differently. Some people need therapy, some people do other things. Some people find something healing. Other people find it traumatic. How do you get through it? How do people find their own path to healing?

Edith Eger:
I usually tell women that you're not a strong woman. You are a woman of strength because what you learn in a situation like that, nothing comes from the outside. Nothing. If you touch the barbed wire, you get electrocuted. If you touch the gauze, you get shocked right away. So I think I ask people not to call me a shrink, but call me a stretch. And I think to do it a good time and to pay attention to your thinking and think about your thinking, whether it's empowering you or depleting you. So if you want to say anything, ask yourself, is it important? Is it necessary? But most of all, is it kind?

Amy Morin:
Mm.

Edith Eger:
I like kindness in [inaudible 00:32:18].

Amy Morin:
I do too. Dr. Engle, do you have any thoughts on PTSD and how people can find their path to healing?
Marianne Engle:
There’s a lot of pain in this world and some of it is things that we may consider not critically important, like not being able to score a goal to help your team when they win. And some of it may be something that you’re carrying around for your lifetime, because you were abused in some way, or you lost something. And certainly with COVID, we’ve lost, New York Times today has this wonderful article on, all these parents who are lost and grandparents now raising the kids and the pain for both the grandparents and the kid for the loss of the parents. And obviously, the war that's going on now. There is so many ways to have misery.

And yet, if you live with your sense of misery on a daily basis, the little depression genie going to come and grab you. And so, there has to be a way for people to have a moment to feel the healing of their pain. And then to try to put it aside for the moment and find a way to live in a positive way and find people to surround themselves with who are kindly, as my mother says. And who will make them into better people. The sad part is that sometimes people who have had terrible things happen to them, seem to get attracted to other people who will abuse them further. And if that is going on, that needs to stop because that will not make you healthier. So I think my point of view is that there can be so much pain, but there can also be ways to set it aside and heal and find the right environment for each person so that they can have some happiness. We all want love and happiness. That's really what life is hoping for us.

Edith Eger:
I have a blackboard in my office and when I hear the word, "I can't," I run to the Blackboard and I put, I can't and then I take the eraser and I take the T and, "I can't," I take-

Marianne Engle:
The apostrophe?

Edith Eger:
Okay. So I can. Why? Because I think I can. So I think I can't is not in my vocabulary and I do not share my life with my patients. But when I hear, "I can't," I tell them that I didn't have anything to eat and cannibalism broke out and I didn't know what to do because I would not touch human flesh. And I turned to God, and God told me to look down and even then, I had grass to eat. And even then, I chose one blade of grass over and against the other. So, "I can't," doesn’t exist. Yes I am. Yes I can. Yes I will. And these are my ways of thinking that, you are not helpless and don't play that helpless, because if you’re a victim, you are always going to find the victim answer.

Amy Morin:
Dr. Eger, thank you so much for your book, for sharing, for teaching us that, even in the worst circumstances, there's always something we can control and that we have choices. And you've gone on to do all of these incredible things. And here you are now, starting your career as an author in your late 80's, early 90's, and teaching us all of these valuable lessons. And it’s clear that you've surrounded yourself with kindness. You use humor, all of these great coping skills. And in your book, you talk about these things, but also show us how you've used it in your own life, which is the best teacher ever.

Edith Eger:
And I will never retire. And I want you to turn to my daughter who is finishing something wonderful. That is going to be on Mother's Day.

Marianne Engle:
No.

Amy Morin:
Please tell us.

Marianne Engle:
You know that there is a new version of The Gift that is going to be coming out.

Amy Morin:
Yes.

Marianne Engle:
And we added two new chapters to it. One is about COVID. So it'll answer a lot of what you asked. And the other is one called Food is Love. And one of my other things that I do, is food writing and I'm a cook, a good cook. And so my mother and I have gone through a lot of our family recipes and 17 of them are going to be in that chapter.

Amy Morin:
I was fortunate enough to get the advanced copy. And I can say, that you definitely... It just makes an amazing bonus to the book to be able to see that stuff at the end. So I'm so excited that you did this.

Marianne Engle:
Oh, thank you. The recipes are really fun and some of them are really, really easy. And I think if you try them, you'll enjoy them. And we actually have a little website put in there
so that if anybody makes them, buy the book, make the recipes, and then tell us what you made because we want to start something with that.

Amy Morin:
Oh, very cool. And you even give, at the end of the book, you talk about the gift of food, but you talk about how to share a meal with people. The conversations to have. How to make food into an event, not just something that we have to do.

Marianne Engle:
If you have a minute, I just want to say this, we have forgotten as a culture, to enjoy ourselves while eating, the TV is on, people are running around doing this or that and the other. You grab something, something's been left for you in the microwave. That's not a meal, a meal is making something special, sitting down and talking about yourselves. That's a meal. And those are the things that families, couples, remember always. And that's what we're hoping to revive, frankly.

Amy Morin:
Again, simple, yet really helpful, powerful tips in this book.

Marianne Engle:
Thank you for having us. We really enjoyed you a lot.

Edith Eger:
Thank you.

Amy Morin:
Oh, you two are so amazing. Thank you so much for joining me today. This is so special.

Marianne Engle:
Aw. Well, you're pretty special yourself, actually. You really understand things.

Amy Morin:
Oh, well, thank you again. I'm a huge fan, actually. I think you made me a hero. One of my neighbors today could not believe that you were going to take the time to talk to me. So he's a huge fan. He's like, "You got to be kidding me." So thank you.

Marianne Engle:
My mother did a Ted talk a couple weeks ago and I was walking in with her and there were all these people who were like, and I can hear them saying to each other, "It's Dr. Eger, Dr. Eger." And then one person turned to me and said, "That's Dr. Eger and she's a hero." And I smiled and I said, "She's my mom." And everyone's like, "Oh my God."

Amy Morin:
How amazing

Marianne Engle:
It was pretty cute.

Edith Eger:
Yeah. It happened too, that the president was reading my book and was-

Marianne Engle:
[crosstalk 00:40:10] In Chile. Yes. So, my husband and I were in Chile and my husband is a Nobel prize winner. And so we were invited to the presidential palace and they had a big event. And all the men, the men were reading her book there, which is called in Spanish, The Ballerina of Auschwitz. The first book.

Edith Eger:
The first book.

Amy Morin:
Wow.

Marianne Engle:
The first book, sorry. The choice was called, The Ballerina... And then they asked me if I could come back a few days later and they all brought copies of the book because they wanted to give them to their families for Christmas. It is amazing to me how her words have had so much power all over the world. It's very cool.

Amy Morin:
Right? I can only imagine how many lives that you've touched.

Marianne Engle:
I'm so happy that she can do this for everyone else. Anyway. And to you. So thank you so much for your interest.
Amy Morin:
Well, absolutely. I'm excited to air this episode. I know you'll help our audience a lot. So thank you.

Edith Eger:
One of the things I see that we have genocide, unfortunately, as we speak, but never in a history of mankind, such a systematic and scientific-

Marianne Engle:
Annihilation.

Edith Eger:
Annihilation of people existed. 15 highly educated people decided they can put 30,000 Jews in the oven. And I think that's important for me to tell you that, thank God I am able to see myself, not a victim of anything or anyone at any time, because suffering makes me stronger.

Amy Morin:
Mm. Very powerful. Thank you so much. I appreciate both of you so much for being here. Thank you.

Edith Eger:
[inaudible 00:42:16].

Marianne Engle:
Thank you.

Amy Morin:
Thank you.

Marianne Engle:
Take care.

Amy Morin:
Take care. Enjoy your [inaudible 00:42:20].

Marianne Engle:
You too. Thank you.
Amy Morin:
That's wonderful. Have a great day.

Marianne Engle:
You too.

Amy Morin:
Bye

Marianne Engle:
Bye.

Edith Eger:
Thank you.

Amy Morin:
Welcome to The Therapist's Take! This is a part of the show where I'll break down Dr. Eger's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. Here are three of Dr. Eger's strategies that I highly recommend.

**Number one: you can't heal what you don't feel.** In her book, Dr. Eger talks about our tendency to compare our suffering to other people, but she says she doesn't want you to think that whatever it is you're going through isn't as bad as what she endured. That idea that you shouldn't feel bad only makes you feel guilty about your emotions. Instead, she says, you have to allow yourself to experience your feelings if you want to heal from them. Don't minimize your pain or tell yourself that you shouldn't feel a certain way. You have to take care of your emotional wounds just like you do your physical wounds.

And Dr. Eger is clear that suppressing your emotions might make you feel better for a minute, but it will hurt you in the long run. To heal, you have to let yourself experience all of those uncomfortable feelings. Keep in mind, though, that healing from something doesn't mean that your pain's going to disappear. As you heard in our interview, when Dr. Engle talked about how she learned her mother was a Holocaust survivor, Dr. Eger gets emotional. Just imagining her daughter finding that book about the Holocaust is still painful to think about, but she lets herself experience those uncomfortable emotions, even to this day.
**Number two: surround yourself with kind people.** Dr. Eger talks about how important it is for her to be around loving, kind people as she healed. Her suggestion to get social support is a good one that's rooted in science. Studies consistently find that social support sometimes prevents PTSD. For example, 9/11 first responders were less likely to get post-traumatic stress disorder if they had strong social support. And in cases where people do develop PTSD, healthy relationships can help them cope with their symptoms better.

On the flip side, people who lack healthy social support are more likely to numb themselves to their emotions, isolate themselves, and develop substance abuse problems. Unfortunately, though, as Dr. Engle pointed out, sometimes people who are abused seek out people who abused them after the abusive incident. On the surface, you'd think that if you've been hurt, your natural tendency would be to gravitate toward people who can help you. But that's not always the case. Sometimes, we look for people who reinforce the unhealthy beliefs that we've developed, like, "We're not good enough," "Other people are bad," and "The world is scary and unpredictable." If you hold onto beliefs like that, you might find it feels uncomfortable to be around people who treat you well. But it's important to your healing. When you're around kind people long enough, the way you see yourself, other people, and the world in general can begin to shift.

Of course, though, when you're hurt and you're struggling, it's hard to find kind people if they aren't already in your life. But there are always options. Join a support group, find an online forum, or contact a therapist to find out what services are available in your community.

**And number three: ask yourself, "Would I want to be married to me?"** I love that Dr. Eger recommends asking yourself this question. So often we look at other people in our lives as the problem, but sometimes, the best way to change your relationship or change your situation is to start by changing yourself. This question can go beyond marriage too. Ask yourself, "Would you hire you?" "Would you be friends with you?" "Would you want to work with you?"

Honestly, answering those questions can help you identify areas in which you want to make positive changes in your life. And when you become the kind of person that you'd want to be around, you become a happier, less resentful person because you're always surrounded by someone you like (which is you). Rather than focus on wishing other
people were different, focus on becoming the kind of person that you’d want to be around.

So those are three of Dr. Eger's strategies that I highly recommend. Remind yourself that you can't heal what you don't feel, surround yourself with kind people, and ask yourself if you'd want to be married to you.

To hear more of Dr. Eger’s wisdom, pick up a copy of her book *The Gift*. It's the best book I've ever read.

And if you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them! Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

Do you want free access to my online course? It's called, “10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential.” To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts. Then send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today and for listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! And as always, a big thank you to my show’s producer (who worked on the number #1 album in the country, Nick Valentin.