

# The Gift with Edith Eger and Marianne Engle

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** [00:00:00] it's very important for you to think about your thinking and pay attention what you're paying attention to,

being flexible in your thinking, Sometimes hard, but really important because the minute people don't feel like there's flexibility on the other side, they become defensive. And once you become defensive, then it's much harder to be happy. that was Edith Ger

and Marianne Engel on psychologists off the clock. we are three clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships work and.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorenson, practicing in Mile High Denver, Colorado. Co-author of Act, Daily Journal, and an upcoming book on act for burnout.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I'm Dr. Yel Shreen, a Boston based [00:01:00] clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the book Work Parent Thrive.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from coastal New England, I. Dr. Jill Sto, author of Be Mighty, the big book of Act metaphors and the Upcoming Imposter. No more.

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**Jill Stoddard:** Thank you for listening to psychologists Off the clock.

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Hey everyone, this is Yel. I'm here with my mom, Devora Chatav to introduce this special episode.

And the reason that I'm having my mother here is that I had a chance to interview a mother-daughter duo, Dr. Edith Ger and her daughter Dr.

Marianne Engel.. Dr. Edith Ger was born in Hungary and in her teens, she was an Olympic level gymnast. But because she was Jewish, she got booted from the Olympic team. And shortly after that, her family were sent to the Auschwitz concentration camps. And in addition to losing her mother and her father, she endured many, many horrific atrocities in the concentration camp.

And what's amazing about her story is that she became a clinical psychologist and uses her past. Other people heal. And she does this actually along with her daughter. my own mom became absolutely taken with Ed's story and her work, and kept sending me videos at, at quotes and,

and [00:03:00] writing from Edie. And I thought she was amazing. But it wasn't until the, um, Ed's publicist reached out to me that I thought I even would have a chance to speak with her. She's a 95 year old Auschwitz survivor, and again, what was so amazing is that I had a chance to speak to her together with her daughter.

So I'm here with my mom, and I wanted to kind of just start by asking you, Mom, why were you so taken by Edy's message? I was taken by Eden Message because of her accomplishment and her, strong, character to overcome all atrocities that she went through, and in spite of her, uh, being so young and didn't.

Didn't finish her education. She came to the United State and in her forties she start school and, accomplished a [00:04:00] lot. And in spite of all the hardship she went through. Yeah, yeah. I mean, she really did not let any of. The tragedies that she experienced and the trauma that she lives with, the post-traumatic stress disorder that she continues to live with, um, Stop her.

She, she has really still managed to take life by the reins and make such a powerful difference for so many people. One thing mom, that really struck me about her story and about the conversation that I had with her and her daughter, Maryanne. Them talking about what it was like to be an immigrant parent and what it was like to be raised by an immigrant parent.

So you and dad came to the United States after you married and you didn't know a word of English. And I wondered if as you listened to the episode, you thought a little bit about what it was like for you as a young mom as an immigrant. And if you sort of had that thought too of how some of some parts of their story really parallel our.

[00:05:00] Uh, yes and no. What I, what I was, uh, very impressed with is their connection and the love between them and the appreciation that they have to each, for each other, not as much as the struggling of a very new immigrant, as much as you know, the love and the connect. Yeah, I was struck by that too and how, how much they just really appreciated and enjoyed each other, they had this very like teasing and loving relationship where Edie would say something to Maryanne like, You have to do this. And Maryanne would kind of push back. And a couple times Maryanne sort of pointed out, but we don't agree on that,

it was cute. Right. Yeah, that was really lovely to see that in spite of the disagreement, they still appreciate and share.

What, what was the biggest take home for you? Either [00:06:00] from the conversation that I had with Edy and Maryanne, or from what you've read, uh, from the work of Edy, what, what's sort of your big take home message that you wanna leave our listeners with? That she always plan for the next day? She, there is always meaning for her life.

She always excited about life and about the next. And she doesn't, uh, live in the past. She always plan for the future. Yeah. This is something that I think at an old age, a lot of people just don't have, the capacity to think about tomorrow. They just worry about tomorrow. Yeah, it's amazing.

At 95, she still has plans for a new book and she was showing me some of the things that she's working on. It really is, it's so inspirational. That's very inspirational that she, you know, she always is excited about the next day, [00:07:00] and even you can see it in the way she bless up, always very colorful and always very happy.

Yeah. Yeah. You're. Well, we hope that all of you out there get as much from Ed and Maryanne as my mom and I did, and that it inspires you to look forward with optimism to tomorrow and to find meaning in today

**Yael Schonbrun:** Dr. Edith Eager is a sought after clinical psychologist and lecturer who brings a message of healing and personal growth in her speaking in her wonderful books, *The Choice and the Gift* She uses her past as a Holocaust survivor and thriver to inspire people to tap their full potential and shape their very best destinys regardless of their circumstances.

It's a message of choice to move from recovery to discovery and beyond and encouragement to find the gifts even in the most painful of situations. Drer's daughter, Dr. Maryanne Engel also joins us today. She is a talented psychologist in her own right and [00:08:00] watched her mother undergo her healing processes when she.

Was a young girl. In fact, Dr. Eager didn't tell her about the experiences in the Holocaust, but Maryanne discovered it by finding a book in her parents' collection and put the pieces together. They are an inspiring mother-daughter duo, working together to bring healing and positivity to the world, and will be focusing on the messages offered in the newest edition of Drer's book, *The Gift 14 Lessons to Save Your Life*, which is colored by Maryanne's influence.

I'm told welcome.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Thank you. Yes, thank you. Thank you.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I also actually wanted to share that this interview is particularly special for me personally. My mother was absolutely captivated Ed by your books and talks. She kept sending me YouTube videos of you on the TED stage talking to Oprah and so on. I actually figured you were way too big of a deal for me to talk to.

So when your publicist reach out to me, I. Kind of hit the jackpot of good luck. So I also think my mother has never been so impressed with anything I've done before.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I love that.

**Yael Schonbrun:** So I hope get to talk a lot about mother-daughter [00:09:00] interactions today.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Absolutely. They change over time.

**Yael Schonbrun:** So let's start with you, Edy. In your writing, you talk not only of your time as a concentration camp prisoner, but also of the dangers of being trapped in the concentration camp of your mind. So I wonder if you could tell our listeners what do you mean by the concentration camp of your mind?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think that people. Talk to themselves and use two words always and never. I'm never gonna find a good man. I'm always gonna be a victim and, uh, And I think, uh, self talk can totally change your whole body chemistry. So I think, uh, it's very important for you to think about your thinking and pay attention what you're paying attention to, anything you pay attention to, you reinforce that behavior [00:10:00] that you want texting with.

**Yael Schonbrun:** you have this one line in your books that I absolutely love. You write that Victims ask. Why me while survivors ask what now? I wonder if you can talk about this, the power of this simple shift in language.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think Auschwitz was a classroom where I learned, uh, not to say why me. And, uh, I did ask, does anyone know that I'm. I felt so lonely. I felt I was just thrown out because I did something wrong. And I unfortunately didn't realize that, um, that's not the way to talk to myself. I have to say to myself, What now?

And how can I keep myself to find hope in hope business? And here I am to tell you about it. So it worked.

**Yael Schonbrun:** And that's the evidence right here. [00:11:00] So you write in your books that you spent a lot of years eating, hiding your past from your children, including Maryanne and Maryanne. Looking back on your childhood now, I'm curious if you have insights into what the costs and benefits were to you as a daughter to have your mother trying to protect you from her painful history.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Well, I love the question. Thank you for that. And I am very grateful, really, that she did protect me because even though we were thrown out of our country, we escaped, lost everything. You know, my mother, my father's family was one of the most powerful, wealthy families. And we came to the US with. Zero. I didn't feel that.

I felt I had MA's parents who loved me. We had been in Vienna, I learned some German. Um, you know, to me life felt like a big adventure. And I think my mother and father were very protective [00:12:00] and I'm grateful for that because now that I've moved to new. And I've met a lot of Holocaust survivors kids. We're not kids anymore, but you know, and, um, they talk about how every dinner was spent talking about what, what was before the war?

What was this, what suffering, who did you lose? I am so grateful that I didn't have to have that be part of my own childhood, and that when it came to me, that I felt such empathy for. My mother and, and her sister and curious about the story. And, and then when my mother finally, you know, I became a psychologist long before she did.

And, uh, , just to be clear, , and she went to college when I was, uh, getting my PhD. I mean, you know, and, and her bravery and always pushing ahead. And then when she went to Auschwitz and came back, she was a change. She [00:13:00] really was, She, she went from being kind of, oh, there was always a little bit of depression behind her eyes to being ha, joyous, happy, relieved.

And, um, so I'm, I'm very grateful actually, for the way this happened. It, uh, for me, it, it worked. Oh, I, There are a couple of questions I'd like to perhaps mention, and the first one is, when did your childhood end? And if you look at survivor's children, so we disagree on this.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Interesting.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I, I think I, I think the word I come up with is parented.

I think she taught me how to speak English. She brought home a book called Chicken Little Goy, Lucy and Turki, and I didn't know one from the other, so I think, I think she grew up very fast and, uh, it [00:14:00] was her who really became my teacher. And taught me how to speak English, but it didn't hurt her, you know, because she graduated with honors and, uh, even the daycare center lady called me, Mrs.

Bowers, that when a child is crying, that Maryanne, who is two years old, to take care of the other kid not to cry. And so she was already a caregiver at such a young age.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Maryanne, how do you disagree with that? Yeah.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Yeah, thank you. You know, I disagree because my mother always feels that there's something, she has to apologize for about my having to be an adult child early.

Whereas I feel like the benefit was that, I mean, I think. Being an adult has been pretty terrific for me anyway. And, and, and I, I was pretty [00:15:00] successful most of my life and I feel like, you know, I do think that children of, , immigrants when they have parents who are well educated and really push their kids in, in a positive way, I don't remember.

I mean, actually, to be perfectly honest, my mother and father never knew what my homework. So thank God I was smart because, you know, it was not like, like we do today with our children, where we know every assignment they have and all this stuff. They never knew anything. And every once in a while they find a paper I'd written and my mother would be over the moon and, and like, Oh my gosh, she can do that.

And, but you know, I was responsible and, and I took it and I, I don't see that that was, uh, harmful to me. I feel like it was, Um, you know, made me who I am

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** and any people that I mention in my books of my patients. I consult with Dr. Ang [00:16:00] and, uh, she's a brilliant consultant and tell me when to shut up and listen, which is the hardest thing to do.

**Yael Schonbrun:** What do you think drew you both to the field of clinical psychology?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** So, um, we ha I have a brother who from Birth on, has had his limitations and watching my mother deal with him and then when I would take him to his, the. Um, I got to see a lot of what happened there and I didn't think it was what I wanted to major in actually, so I didn't, But, uh, I did, uh, uh, speech therapy, that kind of thing.

And then I also did political science, which I adored. Um, and Right, and I, I, I graduated from college early [00:17:00] and I got myself into graduate school with the top person in the country and all that stuff. And then I realized I really wasn't that interested in the, in the speech, I was interested in the mind.

And then, so I, that was research psychology, and the more that I did that, the more I realized, um, I wanted both. So I actually did both. And I taught at U C S D for a while and did research and I, I mean, I was good at it. It was fine. I mean, I, I did very well, but it really wasn't fun, whereas, Being with patients was fun.

So I retrained and I adore. My career. Um, I also do sports psychology and so I work with athletes all over the world and that's really fun too.

Um, I think psychology is the best. And I think my mother, um, when she went back to when she went to school and graduated and she, she, I think she's always been a psychologist in her. In her life. I mean, it's just the way [00:18:00] she achieved as an athlete. I mean, she was an amazing athlete using her mind as well as her body.

So I think for her it was, it was natural. I think for me it was something that came bit by bit.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Oh, that's so interesting. I love that she followed your footsteps in getting a PhD

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Well, it was, uh, . It was really something. So when I was pregnant with, uh, my first child, my mother was, um, busy working on her dissertation and my daughter was three weeks late and I said, You know, mom, you're gonna be here when the baby's born, right? And she said, Well, you know, I do have a meeting with my advisor and I'm gonna do that.

And then I'm gonna like, What, what? Wait a minute. I'm gonna need a baby here.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I wanted to actually back up. So Maryanne, you were saying that when your mother went to Auschwitz to. Revisit this place of trauma. She came back and it was as if something had lifted. Right. It was sort of a change came over U Ed. And given that you're both [00:19:00] psychologists, I'm kind of curious about this moment of change Ed, right In your books.

We do not change until we're ready. And so I'm curious as therapist, as psychologists, how do we help people move towards that readiness?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Well, I don't think, uh, Hamlet was performed by Richard Burton overnight. I think you do something called

rehearsing and rehearsing and rehearsing as long as you need to. To be able to put yourself out there, that is genuinely you. And then you can quote other people from wherever. Um, but I think I refer to people what happens with the unexpected and the unanticipated.

And I begin to talk about Auschwitz as an opportunity [00:20:00] for an opportunity to discover my inner son. But let me answer your question, also

**Yael Schonbrun:** I think it was a good answer, rehearsal, but also seeing opportunities where it doesn't quite happen as opportunities to sort of prepare.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** exactly, exactly. When my mother, if you've read her books, started to treat these men who had posttraumatic stress syndrome. It was just then that she realized that she had it and that she couldn't go any further until she addressed her own. and um, went back to Awis. And there's a great story there because I did my junior year abroad at the University of Copenhagen and I lived with this lovely family.

He was vice president of, uh, the beer company there. And so , it was then they had five kids and it was, it, it was great. And when my mother wanted to go to Auschwitz, they were gonna go to Copenhagen first and then go to [00:21:00] Poland from there. And my date, so my. Danish mother calls me up and says, I don't want your mother to go.

We know people who have gone. They came back and died. It was too much for them to take. I think this is not good. Be good for your mother. And I said to her, You don't know my mother. Um, if she's determined to do something, it's probably gonna happen and my dad will

**Yael Schonbrun:** Don't stand in her way.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** So then it turned out that, uh, the American Poland were having a fight.

The communists were still empowered then, and they forbid any Americans to come to. So my mother goes to the Polish Embassy in, uh, Copenhagen and says to them, You're not gonna let me in. , Do you wanna remember what you did to me? Da, da da da da. I'm going. And they said, Okay, okay. You can go. You can go. So that's how she got there.

So already [00:22:00] this woman is ready to face something. And my favorite, favorite story, and I think it's in the books, is that when she and my dad got

there, they went walking around and then they went to the area where she had been and there was a man walking by in. And she started to, to have that feeling of panic inside her.

And then suddenly she realized that he had to stay there. It was his job, but she could leave and she had an American passport in her pocket and she, my father, said she danced out the door and that's when it changed,

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah,

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** probably. Mm-hmm. ? Yes.

**Yael Schonbrun:** that's a beautiful story.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Yeah, it's a beautiful story. Is that, Yeah,

**Yael Schonbrun:** And I, I mean, you're sort of referring to this and so for listeners who haven't read the books, I mean, you spent many years of your life ed with, with sort of [00:23:00] not being able to confront that truth. But by the time you were ready, you were ready, you were ready to sort of go there and, and not to say that it wasn't painful, but that you had sort of what you needed within you to confront a very painful past and to dance out of.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Yeah, I have, uh, to tell you that I asked my sister to come with me because we lost our family and I never went to a funeral. I think Auschwitz is probably the biggest funeral or know place. Anyway, she told me I'm an idiot to, to do that. So we went through the same experience, but very different responses.

She also said she was an idiot to write these books. But when so successful, she then said, You know, I have a book in Me Too, So. It was very sweet. It was very sweet. [00:24:00] But, uh, my mother's, my mother, in case you haven't guessed, is an incredibly brave woman. And, um, you know, I like to write a book for teenagers and I would like you to be I know, please. Yeah, I know. That's, that's,

**Yael Schonbrun:** That's the next project.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I'm getting no pressure. Have you noticed

**Yael Schonbrun:** Mothers never pressure their daughters. I know that for sure.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** But, you know, anyway, so it's, it's, there's actually a lot of stuff going on with that already.

**Yael Schonbrun:** That's awesome. Oh, I wanna hear more about that.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Yeah.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I wanna actually just talk about close relationships in general. I mean, your, your books talk a lot about, you know, Ed, your relationship with your sister, parent child relationships and marital relationships, and obviously relationships were, in a sense, what got you through outfits.

Um, Point that you make is and, and you're kind of referring to this with your sister Magda, who didn't wanna go back and thought [00:25:00] it was stupid to go, is that the key to maintaining freedom? This is a quote from your book during conflict, is to hold your truth while also relinquishing the need for power and control.

And I think it's so brilliant, but it's an. It's such a complicated question to think about how to manifest that in real life, and so I wonder how do you guide people when they say to you, You know, I have my truth and my partner has their truth, and we can't figure out how to negotiate a compromise or find a way for us each to live in the way that feels right to us while still staying in a close relationship.

What's your advice to people?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I usually ask two questions. The first one is, when did your childhood end? Maria never had a childhood. She was a little adult. The second question is, you like to be married to you.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah,

that's a good question.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think it's a, it's a good way to [00:26:00] approach yourself whether, uh, you are really happy with your life partner.

**Yael Schonbrun:** At various phases in your married life, Edie, how would you have answered that question? Would you like to be married to yourself?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I, I think what I'm going to tell you, what I think I, I experience in marriage is give and take and tolerating differences.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Hmm. Yeah. Hard to do.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think that I have the best marriage and she was only 21. I was lucky. Yeah. And you said the right guy and then you actually follow up. Now kids, you know, in their twenties might meet the right person, but nobody feels like they can get married and then that opportunity can pass them by.

Which I think is actually happening to a lot of women these days.

A lot of women. And then they start to panic in their early thirties cuz they know [00:27:00] they've got their biological clock too. They just had their 50th wedding, Ann.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Uh, congratulations,

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** 53rd, but.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I actually, I wanted to ask you a specific question about marriages that, um, EDI writes about in her book. so. You know, there's the problem of accommodating loved ones too much, and this is, you know, especially a problem for women. And I wonder, Mary, if you would be willing to share the story that Edie writes about of you and your husband navigating independent time while having young children.

Do you know which story I'm talking about?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I know which story you're talking about, , so my husband, um, Rob Engel,

uh, he

**Yael Schonbrun:** quite successful in his own right,

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** had a Nobel Prize and all that.

**Yael Schonbrun:** all that

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I know. No, he's, he's, he's amazing. We just got back from a trip to Italy and he was on the newspapers and he is doing all this work on climate and I, it's, he's so much fun to be married to, but he comes from a, um, or, and he comes from a Quaker [00:28:00] family and he had a one, I loved his father, uh, and his mother, but their marriage was not great.

There was not, um, There was respect and appreciation, but I don't know. They knew how to have fun together. And, um, his grandmother, so his father's mother was a very tough, tough woman. And so he grew up in, you know, I think there are men like this now, even though there were a lot more then where if a woman did something that, that was silly or they didn't like it, they would kind.

Even publicly say something cutting. And it was supposed to be funny, but you know, it wasn't funny. And so there were some qualities that my husband had picked up from his dad. And fortunately I, I mean, I, you know, he would do some things and I knew where they were coming from and [00:29:00] I would just sit 'em down and say, We're not doing that in our.

I know that's what you saw. You didn't like your parents' marriage. I love you. I do not wanna have that kind of marriage. Don't do it anymore. . And, um, and there were things that, that he wanted me to change a little bit or not do, um, which was to, um, wanna go to too many parties, . Um, and I think that honesty from the beginning, Helped a tremendous amount and , I don't know where I got it in my head to do that, but I would , I think it really worked well being honest right from the beginning.

And um, this is a man who loves to work. So we were just in Italy and we found, I found a great place in, um, Sarnia that we could go to and, um, um, This is kind [00:30:00] of the way we've worked life out. That, you know, in the morning he gets up, he sits down at his computer, we'll have coffee and breakfast, but basically he works till noon or one, and then he's mine.

And I, and, and, and I use that as time for me to do stuff I wanna do. And sometimes I, well, often I have work to do too, but I think every couple has to figure out what their. their drama looks like, you know, and, and to make it a fun thing and some, and they're, you know, you're not always gonna agree. Um, but to know that he will listen to me and I will listen to him makes a huge amount of difference and not everybody's willing to do that.

Um, and I think being flexible in your thinking, Sometimes hard, but really important because the minute people don't feel like there's flexibility on the

other side, they become defensive. And once you become defensive, then it's much harder to [00:31:00] be happy. And it just goes on and on and on, as you know, from your, your, um, patients too.

And it's, you know, it's sad to watch that happen

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. Yeah. You're pointing to some core truths of healthy marriages, honesty, flexibility, good listening, Some humor. The, the, the specific story that I love that EDI shared in, in the book that I just wanna share with listeners is, When you had young kids, you had decided that you each needed an independent night, a night to kind of do your own thing, and you had something scheduled.

And then your husband, some famous economist was coming to town and he, you know, didn't, wasn't able to wrangle a babysitter. And there was this beautiful moment where, , He sort of posed the issue to you and you said, Oh, that's too bad. I guess you'll have to figure it out. You gave him a kiss and you went on your way and he figured it out.

He took the kids with him, I think, in their PJs, and I just, It was such a great example of we often think in these very [00:32:00] inflexible, rigid ways. It has to be either or, and we forget about the humor and levity component that can be so helpful. And I, I just really love that, that

being personified is, you know, these are really important qualities in a marriage. And the converse of, you know, having what Ed writes about is this low level resentment that can be a hallmark feature of many marriages that we struggle with. Um, and so, you know, I, and, and I know that edu sort of reflect back on your own marriage and, and see that you struggled with that yourself.

And I wonder, how you use the lessons that you learned in your own marriage and, and help people to sort of move to the other side of that?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** You know, I'm never, When I was speaking in New Zealand in 19 85, 2800 people were there in the audience, and my late husband asked me, I'm a keynote [00:33:00] speaker. What did you think about saying? And my answer was to him, I don't know until I say it. So, and that's the way I operate. I don't know what I'm going to, and I don't rehearse too much.

I just rely, you know, 95 years I've been all around the world, spoke a lot in many places, and I think people either want to be loved or they want to love, or

they either have something what they don't. Or they want something, what they don't have. So it's kind of making it simple. What's missing in your life.

So the question I ask in Hungarian that I translate, if I had a magic wand and I could give you anything, what would you have? What you don't have now? [00:34:00] And they tell me, I wanna be happy. I don't know what to do with that. Who is happy? You tell me

who's happy. You do the best you can. That's humanly possible.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** And it over.

Yeah,

so I think it's good to get older. And wiser, but not sni. And I like to be 95. The chronological age means nothing to me.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Oh, you're amazing for 95. So wait, I have to ask you a question. You don't prepare for like a TED talk, you just kind of

talk.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** No.

Whatever comes, comes out. And

yeah, Book is wonderful. Yes. I think it's good for people also to give up perfectionism because it can lead to procrastination.[00:35:00]

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, well you were, I remember you had a piece in your book where you talk about, you know, it's not courageous to strive for perfection. It's courageous to be average and to embrace being average, and yet neither of you is average

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think takes courage to be average.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. But how do you know well, and Maryanne, what do you make of that, given that you're such an accomplished family, how do you sort of reconcile those two pieces of wisdom?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Well, as usual, I have another version right? My mother doesn't prepare for a TED talk the way you or I would, which is that I would really write things out. I would have point, point, point, point, da da. So what happens is that we, meaning me, and sometimes my sister, whatever, will sit with her and say, Well mom, what do you think is really important [00:36:00] to say?

So we'll have her free associate to us, and then we kind of organize it, and I know it goes straight into her head, and then she organizes it as she. . So it's not that it's just comes out of the, you know, atmosphere. It doesn't, but the way she processes her own information, we did the book that way, you know, is, is that she does best when she can kind of respond early and then reassess in her head and then out it comes and.

Katie, her assistant sometimes will write out different points so that she can look at her. Oh yeah, remember to talk about this. Remember to talk about that. So, so we, we have a strategy that works for her. So I don't want your listeners to feel like, Oh, you just walk into any situation and here it comes.

Because frankly, if any of you running businesses, that's not a good strategy. [00:37:00] Who prepared, think about it ahead of time. But my mother does have this amazing ability to take things, rearrange them, and out they come. , but you know, most people don't. That is the thesis, that is the antithesis. And then there is the synthesis.

Take the polarities and you pull 'em together and that is the way her mind works. That's an art, not a science. Yeah, it's an art. That's, that's, and, and I think this notion of being average, you know, there's average and there's average. Right? What kind of average are we talking about? You know? And our household average is, okay, so you made a.

B plus, I guess that's okay. Um, , I mean, you know, and discouraged every evident. but, but I think there is this sense of, you know, be the best you can be. You know, this thing that parents tell kids of, you know, don't give up. Keep trying. If you need help, ask for help. [00:38:00] You. Take it upon yourself to be who you really are. Um, don't let your telephone or what your friends think get in the way of you being the best you can be.

I think those, I think those principles are incredibly important and not everybody's gifted in writing or math or, or science or whatever. And, um, and so, you know, to, to want that kid to. Straight A's or whatever is, I mean, I see it

all the time and, and we, we have a, we have a generation of ex of exhausted and anxious children, which is not doing them any good.

And my sports psychology, oh my God, the things parents do in the sports field is just actually dangerous for their kids. I like to tell you that when I was liberated, I didn't know how to write. And it took me months and months to try, [00:39:00] uh, capital G. And I'm telling you, it took me months and months to make a capital G that I could really, You see what happens when you are totally becoming this object.

and you are being objectified in a camp and you told every day that the only way you will get out of it as a corps and learn how not to allow anybody, anybody, to define who you are because they could have put me in a gas chamber in a minute for. But I could never murder my spirit.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** And that's what hoping that you will have [00:40:00] with this separation now.

And the Ukrainian, um, surprise that, uh, is, is really a way to being confronted whether you're going to be a survivor or a victim. I refused to be a victim. I was victimized. It's not who I am, It's not my identity. It's what was done to me.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. What's such an interesting, an important take home message that Nazis couldn't determine who you were and also parents can't determine who our kids are. Right. They're kind of far apart, I realize, but it's the same idea. We each get to decide for ourselves who we're gonna be, how we're gonna be, regardless of the messages that we get from anybody else.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** You know, there was a guy from Czechoslovakia, I'm told that he [00:41:00] wanted to go to Vienna, but he didn't have any money for transportation. So he walked from Ccho, Slovakia to Vienna, so, So he could take the test. And he was begging them to allow him to take a test because he was a Jew and he was sitting next to Hitler under a different name, and he could never forgive himself that he passed the PA test and Hitler didn't.

And he always thought if he wouldn't have passed the test, then Hitler wouldn't have. Uh, going against the Jews, lots of things, you know, that I remember from my past. And hearing things that people somehow need to really think

about their thinking and, uh, and see where you are today because the past is gone is one thing [00:42:00] I'm gonna change is the.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Right. Well, let's talk a little bit about, thinking about our thinking in terms of what you call your inner Nazi, right? It's sort of on the other side. right? You right to stop bigotry means you start with yourself. So some, it's easy to look for the bigotry outside of us, but you right, you find the bigot in you.

So how do we do that in a moment in history where, you know, we're seeing the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. We're seeing all sorts of bigotry here in the United States. How do we resist hating the haters and, and why should.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I was, I was asked my, my, my trainer to train another girl for the Olympics, and I'm not qualified because I'm a Jew. And I immediately said to her, I'm not a Jew. You have to go. Only you go to the city hall and when a child is [00:43:00] born, you have your name and the religion. So I trained a Genta girl because I was not allowed, and that's when I really felt the antisemitism, that the first time I felt truly victimized.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, so this was when you were training on the Olympic Committee in Hungary.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Yeah. You know, genocide is what it is today, but never in a history of mankind. Such a scientific and systematic inhalation of people existed. Man celebrated at the end of the. That they can put 30,000 Jews in the oven in one day. This is called the final decision of [00:44:00] Eichman, and I'm part of that final decision solution.

So final solution. I am a very proud Jew, and I tell you why, Because my ancestors were slaves and they were liberated. And I found a guy called Moses, and they started to walk and walk and walk on a desert, my understanding, more than four years. And they never stopped. Never stopped. I carry that blood. I will never, ever stop.

I'm still in the process climbing that mountain, and I sleep and climb, and I never stop climbing. Sorry, I call it evolving or evolving.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Well, I love that cuz even as you tell the story, you're focused so much more on the pride in carrying your tradition, your history forward than on [00:45:00] hatred over other people who have committed unthinkable acts against Jews.

Right. And it's such a model.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think that's exactly the right takeaway is that hatred. . You know, if you hate the people who hate other people, who hate other people, where do we get to? We get a lot of dead people, right? And, and so I think it's perfectly fine. I think my mother thinks it's fine for you to talk about how illogical, uh, some people are and, and the effects of their thinking gets a lot of bad things to happen.

but you haven't said this mom, but I've heard you say it so many times, is that when you take in other people's hate, it weakens you. You know, it weakens you and you become [00:46:00] this other person. There's other things in you, but the best of you doesn't move forward and you really don't get the effects out of humanity that you would like.

Um, and I think that's, that's the answer about hatred. I mean, there's a lot going on in the world that I, I think we all despise, but that doesn't mean that, you know, talking about hatred in the hateful way is gonna make it any better. I'm gonna send you this, okay.

**Yael Schonbrun:** She's holding up a sheet victim or survivor. It's hard for me to see all the texts.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** They're the traits that are common in victims and or survivors. So you know what to focus on and what to, Yeah. This is one of her latest things. It's really.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Oh, cool. Yeah, that would be wonderful if you would send that. Yeah. And, and I think Maryanne, as you're [00:47:00] talking, you know, and having read the books, and, and knowing the science that really f defaulting to anger and hatred. makes it hard for you to do the good work of surviving and overcoming.

And so it's like the Budd is saying like you, it's the hot cold of hatred. When you drop it, then you can move forward as opposed to holding onto it, you're the one that it burns, which as Maryanne as you're saying, it doesn't mean that we, couldn't do the horrible atrocities. People have committed, but rather that we learn to respond to them in ways that are, that feel more productive.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** exactly. Exactly. You know, I never forget what happened. I don't overcome it. I came to terms with it. I think that is a difference because I remember when I went to have steak at Roots Steakhouse, I

looked down and I was walking on couple stones [00:48:00] and it, I triggered in me at a good drug, three good in me time when children were splitting at us in Germany as we were walking and called.

Pigs and dogs and so on, so you never forget. You think you are, and then they are the triggers. When I go to Costco, I see the board wires and Auschwitz comes up and I know I have an American passport and so on. So don't try to forget. Just find a place where you know that you never gave up. And you are a good role mother.

Cause children don't this, don't do what we say. They do what they see.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** You're a good role mother.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. Well, and I have sort of a, maybe a twofold question for the two of you, which is, [00:49:00] given that you guys have such a wonderful close mother-daughter relationship that's, you know, clearly something that most of us really would look up to. What is good advice for modern parents to think about as they're raising their own children and hoping to have close relationships with them through life?

And then the second part of this question, cuz I know this is relevant for the book, but how does food fit into that for the two of you?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** I think you want to give up one word. Shame.

Yeah. I was so ashamed that I spoke English with an accent. I felt that being different is inferior. So I went to school and I really didn't want to open my mouth because I didn't want my child to suffer that her mother doesn't speak. Like any other kids' mother.[00:50:00]

And I think it was very important to, to think about shame and then how we shame ourselves and also shame others. And uh, And how does food get into your relationship? That's a very good question because, Marion wanted me to always cook American hamburgers because my Hungarian hamburgers had eggs in it, and it had garlic in it, and, and, uh, bread crumbs in it, and vegetables in it.

Oh,

she went, wanted American everything. , American hamburger, American Fried Chicken.

**Yael Schonbrun:** That's so funny. So you can probably tell from my name, but my, So my parents are Israeli and [00:51:00] I have so many parallels with that, both in terms of my mom's shame about her accent, her embarrassment, and her worry that it would sort of color the way that people saw our family and also about the food

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** So, um, my mother is an exquisite Hungarian cook. but her version of American food was, um, a different version than the stuff I was hoping for , shall we say. But food has always been a great part of our lives. My father's family business had to do with taking the food from farmers and selling it out and bringing in coffee and selling coffee beans and all this.

So, um, one of the sweet things of my youth was going to the store with my father, and he really taught me how to, how to look at vegetables and, and all these things. Um, but the other thing is my father loved. Food cooked in a certain way. So his idea of a [00:52:00] hamburger or meat steaks and all this stuff was not the American way.

It was the Hungarian way, and some of that is delicious. And some of that was like really? Mom, you know. Um, so anyway, I became a cook and I wrote a food column for a while and all this, and we have a really good time in our family with the cooking. My mother would have one night a week that she would come to the house and cook and she would make these amazing meals.

And, um, and I was, you know, inventing all these other recipes here and there. And so food has. Very important part of our lives. We, we love food. We love fresh food. We, we, we, we were growing and going to farmer's markets and doing that long before it was, you know, the chic thing to do. Let me tell you about this.

Monday night was my time to cook and when I made the chicken public car my grandson maybe had [00:53:00] second unto. And uh, and I was watching that. My daughter, his mother said, Jordan, I know you're going to college next year. Would you please sit in my lap? So he went over, blocked himself in her lap. So after dinner I told him, What would it take for me for you to sit in my lap? And his answer was, Look pathetic, I see. Only do these things after you've had a good meal, Right?

**Yael Schonbrun:** How much was in that chicken?

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** So, so one of the things that I, I really wanted with the books, and that's why we added two extra chapters in, in she's [00:54:00] responsible for the recipe. Yeah. Yeah. And so, um,

**Yael Schonbrun:** So there's a bunch of recipes in the gift, including for chicken, pepper, cash.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Exactly. Exactly. So the first chapter is about covid and how did we cope, And the second chapter is on love and food, , which I wrote. And, and you know, for us as a family food, um, and, and my husband and I, we love to entertain and cook and he loves good wine and, you know, that kind of atmosphere.

is so sweet in making relationships work with your friends, with your family, with your children. You know, I think it's important for kids to learn how to eat lots of different foods and to have family meals a lot. And so for this. Chapter. , I took 17 recipes that were, some were my mother, some were mine, some were some of her [00:55:00] friends.

, I did a Hungarian series. Um, While ago, and I got recipes from a lot of her friends. And so for this, I put some of those recipes in there, I redid them. , so I really wanna encourage all of you to buy that book and try the recipes and let me know how you like them, because we really did work hard to make them easy to do.

And very, , I tried to explain them carefully so that it wouldn't be a mystery about how to really make it taste. And, and you know, I just flew in from New York last night and I brought some fresh bagels that I bought yesterday for breakfast this morning. For us, I mean, you know, it's really food. Food is love.

It really is. Mm-hmm.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, it's such a, it's such a way to connect, to celebrate and, and to sustain one another. I mean, you know, eating your experience in Auschwitz and, and the other [00:56:00] camp. You were starving, right? But you dreamt of food and it gave you a reason to kind of look forward and to connect with the other people who were suffering.

And, and then, you know, you really needed that food to, to recover. And, and now it's a way to connect with family and to build traditions and celebration and

it, you know, there's so much that we take for granted around food and I love that. That is, um, a main point of the book. One of the. Gifts that we can look toward to to really survive and thrive.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. It's a nice way of putting it.

**Yael Schonbrun:** So I'm gonna end with a quote from, from your book, from the gift that, and, and I'll just kind of read it out. Um, we can't take away suffering. We can't change what happened, but we can choose to find the gift in our lives. We can even learn to cherish the wound. And I just have to say, you know, the books, the, the choice and the gift are really should be required reading for anybody.[00:57:00]

And I just wanna thank you so much for your time and invite you to share with our listeners where they can find out more about you and your work, both of you.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** And I wanna thank you being, coming and uh, and interviewing. It's a day I will never forget as long as I live

**Yael Schonbrun:** Oh, sha, thank you. What? Tova.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** So my son manages her social media, so you should really go onto Facebook or, . Instagram. And he's also a photographer, so there's always a beautiful picture of her or the grandchildren, , with, with what she's has to say. And, , I think that's a re a really good way. And in. Book with, , recipes. I actually have a, uh, email address there for you to write to me and tell me how you did beautiful, how you liked them. Today I have three children, five [00:58:00] grandchildren, and seven great grandsons, and that's my best revenge to Hitler.

**Yael Schonbrun:** That's. And millions and millions of fans and people whose lives, you've changed through your work and your wisdom and your willingness to, to meet people where they're at. So you're you, you are both such a gift and I just wanna thank you from the bottom of my heart. This was such an honor.

**Edith Eger and Marianne Engle:** Thank you. You, you've done, you have done a, a great job. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. I hope you have a wonderful relationship. Uh, With anyone that you interview because you are a wonderful interviewer and so I wanna congratulate you for choosing us Wonder Daughter, both professionals.

**Yael Schonbrun:** hey psychologist off the clock listeners. I'm going to guess that if you are listening to this episode, that [00:59:00] you love to geek out about books in psychology.

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