

Sharsheret National Book Club

with Dr. Edith Eger

National Webinar Transcript

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Presented by:



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Nancy: You may have noticed that all participants were muted upon entry. Please keep yourself on mute throughout the call. We've received many important questions through registration, which we will be addressing. There will be also time tonight for participants to ask questions of our guests. Please use the chat box, which you can access from the bottom of your screen. For those of you who are new Sharsheret and as a reminder to others, Sharsheret has been providing telehealth support services to the breast and ovarian cancer communities for 20 years, because cancer is much more than simply a physical experience. In addition to our many formal programs to help women and their families navigate different aspects of the cancer experience, I want to remind you that our clinical social workers are available every weekday from nine to five in each time zone for one-on-one support. They can answer questions, connect you to appropriate resources, allow you to vent on a difficult day and so much more. As always our support services are 100% confidential and 100% free.

As we move into the webinar itself, I also want to remind you that Sharsheret is a national, not for profit cancer support and education organization, and does not provide any medical advice or perform any medical procedures. The information provided by Sharsheret is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment for specific medical treatments. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem. Always seek the advice of your physician or qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. And now it is my honor and my pleasure to introduce Dr. Edith Eger. Dr. Eger is a world renowned psychologist and lecturer. She's also a survivor of the Holocaust, a native of Hungary. She was just a teenager when she endured and witnessed unspeakable horrors. Losing her parents at Auschwitz, dancing for Dr. Mengele in order to save her life. And surviving the death March in Austria.

After the war, she moved to Czechoslovakia where she met her husband. In 1949, she and her young family moved to the United States, arriving almost penniless and enduring so many challenges. In 1969, she received her degree in psychology from the University of Texas El Paso, and she pursued her doctoral internship at the William Beaumont Army Medical Center at Fort Bliss in Texas. Dr. Eger has a clinical practice in La Jolla, California, and holds a faculty appointment at the University of California, San Diego. She specializes in working with people facing PTSD. She draws upon her experiences as a Holocaust survivor to help people heal, to face their limitations, discover their power of self-renewal and achieve things they previously thought unattainable. In 2017, at the age of 90, Dr. Eger published her memoir *The Choice*, an amazing, amazing book. *The Choice: Embrace the Possible*. This book has received two book awards, was a *New York Times* bestseller and is internationally acclaimed.

Her second book, *The Gift: Twelve Lessons to Save Your Life*, was released in September of 2020. It is a how to guide, filled with incredible practical advice on healing and living your fullest life. I just finished rereading both these books and they are life changing. Each time I read them, I am moved and awed and

inspired. I know I will go back to them again and again. Dr. Eger, it is my absolute pleasure, and my honor to be speaking with you and I can't thank you enough for joining us. We've received a series of questions that I'm going to share with you. Some submit by our staff and others by registrants for the webinar. I anticipate that as we speak, there will be additional questions that will come up in the chat and we will try to get to as many as we can. As I prepared for this webinar, and I organized my questions, I kept thinking about a beautiful pearl that your assistant Katie Anderson shared with me several weeks ago.

She said that when I interviewed Dr. Eger, just give her a crumb and she will make a banquet. Dr. Eger as I offer our questions and our crumbs, please know that we are all prepared to feast on the banquet that you'll lay before us.

Dr. Eger: Thank you. Thank you. So very kind, and I couldn't be happier to know that being proud to be Jewish really means to me that our ancestors were slaves, they got out of slavery and ended up walking more than 40 years, I researched that and never gave up. So we carry that blood. I'm very proud to be a woman of strength. And that strength came from the darkest places that I was able to look at the guards and reminding myself that they are the prisoners, not me. And to be able to go day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, because I knew that my liberation will come and thank God it did. I did on May 4th, 1945. You can check it out with the Red Cross. I did return to Auschwitz. And the work I do is about grieving, feeling and healing. You cannot heal what you don't feel.

Nancy: And I'm definitely going to ask you about that later. So that's one of the questions that I love that saying. When I read your book, I heard your voice constantly talking about how in life and in your experience, we're all too often thrust into what's unexpected. And there's just so much that we cannot control. Whether it's the Holocaust, a cancer diagnosis, COVID 19, and your philosophy is choice. And I want to read from something in *The Gift*, where you say that while suffering is universal, is victimhood is inevitable and... Oh my goodness, I apologize. I'm on the wrong page here. So you'll, excuse me. I would like to actually start with your philosophy of choice and you write that while suffering is inevitable and universal, we can always choose how we respond. And I seek to highlight and harness my patient's power to choose, to affect positive change in their lives. What advice would you give of people trying to make positive change for themselves in difficult times and cope with all the things in this life that we cannot control?

Dr. Eger: I think the worst vice is advice. I try to stay away from advice and I don't ask, how are you? I don't ask anything about how can I help you because I'm not humpty dumpty, and I don't put people together, but I do ask, how can I be useful to you? Because I'm doing it with you as you do rather than for you or to you. So I think it's very, very important for us to look at our thinking. Because if you change your thinking, you can totally change your life. So I would really think of telling everyone to really recognize that there is something between our brains and we have two ears so we would listen more and one mouth. So we will talk less. I like questions and answer them sometimes as Jewish people do, answer a question with a question. How are you, well, how do you think I am? But I like the idea of a

dialogue that I can be I, and you can be you, but together be going to be much stronger than you alone or me alone.

Nancy: Yeah, very wise words. And as a parent, I'll keep that in mind, particularly. So many pearls of wisdom throughout your book and back to my glasses and I'll get to the right page this time. But you talk a lot about victimhood and victimization. And I wanted to read from how you do mention that, unfortunately suffering is universal, but victimhood is optional. And you continue to say, that many of us stay in a prison of victimhood, because subconsciously it feels safer. We ask over and over believing that if we could just figure out the reason, the pain would lessen. Why did I get cancer? Why did I lose my job? Why did my partner have an affair? We search for answers for understanding as if there's a logical reason to explain why things happened the way they did. But when we ask why we're stuck searching for something or someone to blame, including ourselves. Can you talk a little bit about the difference between suffering and victimhood?

Dr. Eger: Sure. Suffering is a feeling. And I also like to differentiate between believing... People tell me I believe this and I believe that. I like to look for what kind of life you lead. I have faith. I have faith instead of beliefs that somehow no matter what I do and what I say, hopefully it's going to look at me by others not ever being a victim. I was victimized. It's not who I am. It's not my identity. It's what was done to me. That's important to differentiate faith and beliefs. People say, I believe, I believe, I believe. Well show me. Show me what time do you get up in the morning, and how can you look at your perfectionism and find out that you're just human. You're going to make mistakes. And it's okay. It's okay to be average, it's okay to make a C or a B or even an F and a flunk. I think being human means that you give up perfectionism because perfectionism leads to procrastination.

Nancy: Yeah. And I think that's something that a lot of us struggle with. It's hard.

Dr. Eger: Yes. A lot are struggling when it goes about procrastination, because then you go backwards and why is a past oriented world and a problem oriented world. It's better to see what is going on rather than why me. Well, why not me? Why me but why is the past oriented world, a problem oriented world. I like instead of why me to say what now, so I can walk, I can now finish this year as well as I can and to light all the candle on Hanukkah. And by the way, Rabbi Raskin came and he brought a bottle of wine and he opened the wine and started to dance. There was one thing I learned, never touch a rabbi. So we were dancing when I was there and he was over there, but I learned, because one time I wanted to shake hands with the rabbi and he backed off. So from now on I don't shake hands with rabbis, but I honored them very much not to be smart, but to be wise.

Nancy: Very nice. Yeah. Thank you. And I think everything you said goes to your whole philosophy about the choices we make and we can make that decision to embrace and to live and to wake up in the morning and live a full day. So it's wonderful. I have a question from one of our clinicians and they often hear from people who try to minimize and diminish what they're going through. And I think we all do that in life, but people will say, who am I to complain? When I compare myself to my friends, my neighbors, to what Dr. Eger, who survived the Holocaust went through, and it could really be so much worse. And throughout

your book, you repeatedly say, well, there's no hierarchy of suffering. There's nothing that makes my pain worse or better than yours. There's no graph on which we can plot the relative importance of one's sorrow versus another. What would you say to our callers or people in general when they try to discount or minimize their pain?

Dr. Eger: Well, a woman came to me and told me I was unfortunately touched, but how can I tell you Edie, because you were in Auschwitz? I looked at her and I said, "I knew the enemy, you didn't." So it's not comparing. It's something that is unexpected, unanticipated. We are told one thing and we found another. That's what we are doing with COVID. We were not prepared for that. It was unexpected, unanticipated. We were told one thing and we found another. So don't minimize what is going on. See how you can allow, instead of going to your head and understanding. Men always go to the classroom to understand everything. We women go to the heart, and I want that feeling to be felt. So what comes out of your body doesn't make you ill? What stays in there does. And I never told anyone I was in Auschwitz close to 20 years because I wanted to be you. I wanted to be a Yankee Doodle Dandy. I wanted to speak English without an accent.

And look where I got with the accent. I am going to have a Hungarian accent. And I went to the department of languages and I was told by a brilliant man that go home, you're going to have a Hungarian accent, and just live with that. I even went back Auschwitz. And I think the work that you are doing is guiding people somehow welcome that feeling and go through the valley of the death. Go through the pain rather than being stuck in it. I call stuckness constipation. And when you are constipated, you concentrate on a movement. So I call it an arrow that you have a goal on. And then what you're focusing on that can get you closer to your goal.

Nancy: Yeah. Thank you. You anticipated so many of my questions, that I'm going to pop them a little bit more because you talked about the importance of like going through your pain and facing what burdens you. And I know in the book that you take issue with the conventional wisdom that says, if something bothers you or causes you anxiety just don't look at it, don't dwell on it and don't go there. And you have these amazing, beautiful aphorisms, I'm sorry, that I've heard people call "Edie-isms". And I just like to share a few, and I love them. I had a need to make a whole list, but one of them is the opposite of depression is expression. What comes out of you that's not what makes you sick, it's what stays in there. And the Hungarian saying, don't inhale your anger to your chest. And then another one that honestly reminds me of something that my favorite yoga teacher used to say all the time when she was putting us in a position that pushed us to the edge. And she said, you've got to feel it to heal it. I'd love if you could talk a little bit more about letting go of secrets and of facing our difficulties and the painful aspects of our life.

Dr. Eger: When you are angry, anger is not a primary emotion. You either vent anger, you suppress anger. It's better to dissolve anger, because underneath of anger are many other emotions that we cover with anger. We cover frustration. We cover anxiety, and there's no such thing as anxiety, we think anxiously. And that's what

it's all about. It's very important how we get up in the morning and look in the mirror and say, I love me. Self-love is self-care. It's not narcissistic.

Nancy: Yeah. And hard for people to remember that sometimes, or make peace with that.

Dr. Eger: That's right. Just make peace that you are human. That perfectionism is something that will hold you back because there is no such thing as perfectionism. What it is, that you keep doing the same thing over and over again. And that's what Albert Einstein told us. That's the definition of insanity.

Nancy: The definition of insanity. That's right. That's right. So on a related note and you mentioned this earlier again, that your book talks about the prison of trying to protect others from your feelings. And you were mentioning how you didn't want to tell your children about your experience. And that it's so typical to show people, and we do this all the time. We want to show people the version of themselves that they want to see, and you hid your past from your children. And I know that's an issue for many of our callers because they don't want to burden their loved ones with all the pain they're going through and everything. So how can you maybe give some advice to our callers and our audience today, about how to reframe their way of thinking about family members who protect us, trying to be supportive and about sharing their story and what they're going through.

Dr. Eger: I think it's important, the relationship that you have with yourself. That you are not operating on an ego, because the ego is your false self. You see, I introduce myself, hopefully, as a person who lived life as well as I could. And I'm not trying to sugar coat it. I just say that I have been suffering and realizing that suffering made me stronger.

Nancy: Okay. Yeah. That's-

Dr. Eger: So what about sharing the pain with your family? I remember my late husband looked at my daughter when she was 16 and I bought her a beautiful orange silk dress. And my late husband said to my daughter, "Go have fun. When your mother was your age, she was in Auschwitz." I thought I'd kill him.

Nancy: A lot of Jewish guilt...

Dr. Eger: And I said to my husband, how dare you talk like that? My daughter didn't think of much at all. She loved that father, but I said, "How can you talk like that?" And I think it's okay to say whatever you are saying, and knowing that people are going to love you anyway. My definition of love is the ability to let go. Let go. And one of the things I let go of, the need for someone else's approval. If I come to you and tell you, "I really would like to get to know you. I hope you would like to get to know me too. And I really hope that you would accept me as your friend." And you tell me, "I thank you. And yet I'm not interested." Okay. Now look what happened, the best four lettered word in the English language start with an R. Can you think of it? I'm going to make it easy. It's risk.

Nancy: Make it easy. I'm not getting it.

Dr. Eger: I was risking and I didn't get what I wanted, but there is no such thing as rejection, because no one reject me, but me. You can call me any name of the book and I just say, thank you for your opinion, or a lot of thank you's. I say lot of thank you's, but never denies someone else's truth. So if you tell me [inaudible 00:25:32] my answer is, oh, tell me about it, or tell me more because love is time. T-I-M-E, time. I think the work that you're doing is not a work. It's your calling.

Nancy: Thank you. Thank you. And I think I remember you saying, which really resonated with me too, that we don't experience rejection. What it is, is disappointment. And if you have a disappointment, you can move on from it, but it doesn't mean that you are rejected.

Dr. Eger: Exactly. No one can reject me, but me. And that just not to take it personally, and people will tell you what they going to tell you. I think it's very good to develop a dialogue. And Jewish people are very good with self-dialogue. I think we talk to ourselves quite a bit-

Nancy: All the time...

Dr. Eger: And that is good.

Nancy: It is.

Yes. So in addition to talking to ourselves, we keep getting all these wonderful questions that keep coming in through the chat. And a bunch of them are kind of similar. So I'll put a few together and it's really about we said that this is going to be a discussion about resilience. And one woman said, "When I'm dealing with my health, how do I stay resilient? Or how do I cope when there's not a single part of life is doable or workable on top of my cancer diagnosis?" So when people are facing such times, where do they find their strength and resilience? How do they do that?

Dr. Eger: Well you think about your thinking and you start with your head and then go down to your arms and then you shake it out, shake it out, shake it out and don't hold it inside. It's very important for you to listen to yourself and where is it coming from? And chances are you have some unfinished emotional business from your family of origin. It's not what is happening now. Whatever is happening. It's just happening because you were triggered. That's a very good English word. You get triggered and you want to know why am I might think this? Why are you getting triggered? And you better welcome it and pay attention to that and see that you may have some unfinished emotional stuff from your family of origin. My mother told me, I'm glad you have brains because you have no looks, you know that.

And I took that very seriously. I became very serious scholar. I read the Interpretation of Dreams by Freud. I had my own book club and my boyfriend and I were Zionists and we were going to Palestine to fight. We were really going to fight. We weren't going to go to make peace. I think we were very, very, very interested in going to fight for Palestine. And what happened, my boyfriend, I see him every day. I have it on my computer. And I look at him and I realize that he

was killed a day before liberation. And so I love to have a movie to honor him the 16 year old, who didn't make it here, and let people know that I do everything in my power to see to it that my parents didn't die in vain.

Nancy: Amen.

Dr. Eger: So that's why, what comes out of your body doesn't make you, ill, what stays in there does. So it's good to really talk and listen, but listening compassionately. Compassionate listeners is something that I practice and I hope you are too. I'm sure you are.

Nancy: I'm trying. And some people have asked the question about when you've gone through so much, like everything you experienced, how do you still have faith? And one woman wrote to us. And she said, "I went through my cancer diagnoses and I came through the other side," and then she was diagnosed with ALS. And when all these things happen, how do you find faith and how do you be okay with that?

Dr. Eger: I think faith is something that you never give up. I was told every day, the only way I will get out of here is as a corpse. I heard it every day, and I said to myself, when I get out of here. You know, my sister, when we were standing in our nakedness, she asked me a good Hungarian woman's question. How do I look? Now I had a choice then, as you have a choice now, to concentrate on what she lost, and there she was in her nakedness, and instead I said, "Magda, you have beautiful eyes and I didn't see it when you had your hair all over the place. I didn't lie, but again, we choose what we point out that the victims will always find a victimizer. In fact, yesterday's victims can easily become today's victimizer as you know. But you are passionate, compassionate listeners, and I'm sure people are so happy when they see you. When they see your beautiful eyes smiling.

Nancy: Oh, thank you.

Dr. Eger: When you enter the room, look at people eyes that are smiling.

Nancy: Yes.

Dr. Eger: This is your calling. B'sheret (inevitable or preordained)

Nancy: Thank you. And I think it was the b'sheret for me on a personal level for so many reasons to be doing this today and really such an honor. I'm going to go to some more of the questions. One of the things that we do at Sharsheret, and I'm sure you know the Hebrew word Sharsheret is chain or connection. And we connect people. A peer support. So if somebody's going through whatever stage they're going through, we connect them with a peer supporter, if they want, who's been through that. And some of our callers have asked, how do I know how much of my own story to disclose to them while I'm being their supporter? And I know as a therapist, and if somebody's had your own story, can you offer any type of guidance on how much when they're supporting somebody they should disclose and share?

Dr. Eger: I think it's important for you know what is best shared and what is not. And it's your gut, your *kishke* is going to tell you, go to your *kishke* and you going to have the answer right there. Don't think too much. Sometimes we think too much and we need to listen more as compassionate as we can. So I think you are brilliant listeners. I am sure you don't have to really teach it, just practice it. Children don't do what we say, children do what they see.

Nancy: Yes. So go with our guts really and trust our instincts. Right?

Dr. Eger: Right.

Nancy: Let's see a lot of these questions overlap but let me try to think of something. Many of our callers face difficult choices about treatment, about family planning, about disclosure. Do you have any advice on people should go about the process of making difficult decisions in their life?

Dr. Eger: I don't think you can think of marriage until you are financially and emotionally independent. I think it's important for you to become a good mommy to you, because you have a little girl inside you and that little girl is crying, I want to have a good mommy. Okay. And make a list of pros and cons. It's hard work, especially in your twenties, and see where you are. That you are not going steady and getting into marriage proposals when you have to marry you. Marry the part in you that you can be a good mommy to. That you know what is good for you, and what is not good for you? And think that's why Jewish people survived because we never give up. Ever give up, no matter what you hear outside. They took my blood many, many times, and when I asked, why are you taking my blood?

And he said, "I take your blood to aid the German soldiers so we can't win the war and take over the world." And I remember hearing especially America taking over. And I said to myself, you stupid idiot. You're going to take over America. I know better. So you see you listen to what is said outside, but you don't fight with it. You don't waste any time with that, so the question is not why me, the question is what now. That you do not ever allow anyone to murder your spirit. And that's what I bring you today. That spirit that I will never ever give up as long as I live. That I do everything in my power to see that my parents didn't die in war in vain, and that will never ever happen again. Unfortunately, on January 6th, this year, someone wearing a shirt, 6 million was not enough. Unfortunately, history has a tendency to repeat it itself, I'm going to hear everything and everyone, and I will speak up as well as I can to see to it that it will never happen again.

Nancy: Thank you for doing that. And thank you for inspiring all of us to stand strong and to be active and to believe in ourselves and to do what we feel is the right thing and what we need to do. Let's see, I'm just trying to....

Dr. Eger: You are chosen to do what was assigned to you.

Nancy: Thank you. It's funny as you were speaking and you were talking about loving yourself, I'm thinking about that. And the contrast between the classic yiddishe mame who is like, takes everything on our plate. Oh, I think you actually talked

about it in your book. Don't take that. That's for me, you should take first. And I think it's hard as women and as Jewish women sometimes to take care of ourselves and even when people are sick to take care of themselves, because we're so used to being caretakers for everybody.

Dr. Eger: Yes. And we think we are selfish if we do that. But again, remember if you don't love you, why should I? Yeah.

Nancy: Okay. So somebody asked you, they said my father was liberated from Dachau. After my breast cancer experience, I struggled to use the word survivor. What are your thoughts on people who went through breast cancer to use the word survivor or other terminology?

Dr. Eger: Yes. I think words are important, but it's not what you say, it's what you feel. I would go to my heart and I would go to the feeling, and the word is permission. You give yourself permission to feel the feelings rather than talk about a feeling. It is important to recognize that what comes out of your body doesn't make you ill, what stays in there does. And that's why it took me a long, long time until I got a book called Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. So the voice is the female voice of Viktor Frankl.

And then we met here in San Diego and I became really so blessed to be able to become a logotherapist, a diplomate in logotherapy. And that's what I am doing with people to be able to hear their story. I have a story, but I'm not my story. So I think that's important. That you have a story. You have yours, I have mine. But we are not competing or dominating. We cooperate hopefully, and that's why you are where you are. And you're not retiring ever. There is no such thing as retirement. No way I will ever retire. I'm better now than I was 50 years ago. See, because I lived life to the fullest. Hopefully.

Nancy: No, you do. You're an inspiration to all of us. Unbelievable.

Dr. Eger: Yes. And came to America penniless, went to school, graduated with honors, but unfortunately I never showed up for my graduation because I thought that I don't deserve it. So be careful not to overdo anything. Today, I would show up or I would scream it out. But at the time I had the survivor's guilt that didn't really allow me to get what I deserved and worked for so long. So I think it's very good to be a good parent to ourselves.

Nancy: Yes. Before you talked about that there's no such thing as an anxiety attack that, we suffer from anxiety, but I think many people on this call today, I'm sure at one point or another has had an anxiety attack and I've had some questions that come in. And I'd love it even for myself, because we've had these, how do you handle what feels like overwhelming anxiety when something in your life is so out of control? Do you have any techniques or suggestions for people?

Dr. Eger: Get rid of the word handle. We are not handlers. No, we are not handlers. When you hear something that you just don't know where to put it, and you can just wonder about that. Where does it belong in you? Whether it's empowering you or depleting you. Do you want to feel soft and warm, or cold and stiff? See, it's very

important to pay attention. What you're paying attention to? Any behavior you pay attention to you reinforce. You're going to tell me, I'm never going to think about Hungarian chocolate cake. Guess what, you're going to think about it? Because that's how our mind is working. Whatever you think about you bring it on. And so it's very important to rehearse and even look in the mirror and say, okay, someone told me that I'm going through midlife crisis. There is no such thing as midlife crisis.

There is a midlife transition. I can't have any children, but who wants them anyway by then. I'm going through a midlife transition and I'm going to maybe change my hair color. Maybe I want to lose a few pounds or something that I do every day that I have previously avoided. So that's why I say, don't call me a shrink, call me stretch. You stretch is your comfort zone. And then you become more cooperative too with others and not to criticize anyone because criticism will never really bring love. So fear and love does not coexist. It's good to sit down and write down all your fears because you weren't born with them and what you learn, you can unlearn.

So every negative you can write down five positive. So not yes, but, but yes, and. So give me the but, and I give you an and. Yes, and I grow every day. I grow every day and I'm going to be a good role mother to others because children watch you. So hopefully that when you talk to children and that child is 10 years old, don't use words like cognitive dissonance, because they don't know that. And I think to meet people where they are, but treat them as if they were... But they are really able to incapable of becoming. That is an art, and I know you have that. Meet the person, not the way they are, but what they could be.

Nancy: To constantly remind ourselves of that. Whether you're dealing with people who are older, people who are younger.

Dr. Eger: Right. Yes. And get rid of their chronological age.

Nancy: That's right. You are so, so right. Yes. And you're right. You can keep growing. And maybe for some of us, we get to get a PhD at 60 and write a book at 90 and so many wonderful things.

Dr. Eger: Exactly. Might as well because I knew that when I was 40, my supervisor told me to go get a PhD. And I said, it's impossible. By the time I get a doctorate, I'll be 50 or 60. And he said, "You'll be 50 anyway." See that we cannot stop aging. It's what we do with it and how we can become wiser and older that people come to us and listen to us that black and white personality is too rigid that you want to try something new. Something that you previously avoided. And then you reward yourself. And give yourself an at-a- girl.

Nancy: I love that! We can give ourselves kisses and love.

Dr. Eger: You got it. You got it. So have to be a good mommy to you.

Nancy: Good mommy. Yes. Very important. So I think we have time for maybe one or two more questions. So I'm looking through the list and trying to see some of

them overlap. Some of them are not necessarily Sharsheret questions, but I'm going to ask you anyway. Let's see. What do your children do and how do you separate what you went through... I'm sorry. How do we turn it around when we feel discouraged? I think you did talk about that a little bit. Maybe we'll ...

Dr. Eger: I had two beautiful daughters and then my son was born. And my son did not develop like my girls did. He didn't sit up. He didn't walk. He didn't talk. And in 1960, when he was four years old, I asked, where do I go for a second opinion? And they sent me to Johns Hopkins and a beautiful doctor Clark took my son. A week later, he sat me down and he said, "Your son is not retarded. Your son is going to do everything everyone does. It's going to take him longer to get there. And I say, "Where do I go from here?" He says, "You go home." And that was El Paso, Texas. And every day in every way you practice something with him. And what happened is I asked him, "How much do I owe you?" He said, "\$10." So I went home. I dropped out school. My son John, graduated as a top 10 student from the University of Texas. That's what happens.

Nancy: That's right.

Dr. Eger: For an answer. No.

Nancy: No. And I remember you writing that he's also a disability rights advocate, which is amazing.

Dr. Eger: Yes. He just called me this morning and told me how much she loves me. I think it's important for you to love yourself. And I hope that you do that because self-love is self-care. It's not narcissistic. So I hope you and your husband have a wonderful marriage because that's the best thing you can do for your children. Have a happy marriage.

Nancy: My husband is dancing in the background. He's on the other side and he heard you. So you made him very happy.

Dr. Eger: Beautiful.

Nancy: Thank you. You can come in and wave. I am going to ask you one last question before we wrap up and which is, if you were going to tell us what is the secret to a life well lived? And I feel like you've given us so wonderful pearls and Edie-isms, what is your secret to a life well lived?

Dr. Eger: Smile with your eyes.

Nancy: Thank you. Thank you. So thank you-

Dr. Eger: Shalom.

Nancy: Shalom, shalo, l'hitraot. (Thank you, good bye, until we meet again)

I want to thank you, Dr. Eger, so much for joining us today. You are a gift and your words and your advice, they're so inspirational. If anybody would like to purchase Dr. Eger's books or follow her on social media or find links to her podcast, you can go to dreditheger.com. We're going to put a link to the website in the chat. And right now also we're going to put a link to a quick evaluation survey into the chat. Please check it out, click on it now. You'll still be able to hear the last few announcements. Dr. Eger has generously volunteered to autograph one copy of *The Gift* and one copy of *The Choice* for the winner of our lottery for filling out the evaluation. So I would encourage you to do so. I also want to let you know about several very exciting webinars on a wide range of topics that we have planned for the next few weeks.

On Thursday, December 9th, so this Thursday, at 8:00 PM. Eastern Standard Time, Dr. Beth, Ricanati, the author of *Braided: A Journey of a Thousand Challahs*, will demonstrate making challah dough and discuss the grounding and meditative nature of making challah. On Thursday, December 16th at 2:00 PM, Eastern time, Dr. Batsheva Marcus will be joining Sharsheret for a frank conversation about sexuality and cancer, changes, challenges, and new approaches. And on Monday, December 20th, please join us for a discussion with Sharsheret's amazing genetic counselor, Peggy Cottrell for beyond B-R-C-A or BRCA: What Do These Results Mean for Me. In addition to BRCA one and two, she will be discussing some other common findings on genetic testing and explaining what they mean for you, your family, and when you should consider an updated test. So please check our website regularly to see what topics are coming up. We will post the link in the chat box.

You can also access recordings and transcripts of all of our past webinars by clicking the same link that is in our chat box now. Finally and as always, remember that Sharsheret is here for you and your loved ones. And so are Dr. Edie's books. We provide emotional support. We provide mental health counseling and other programs designed to help navigate you through the cancer experience. All of our services are customized, confidential, and completely free. Contact information is being placed in the chat box now. Your health and your wellbeing are our priority, and please feel free to lean on us. Dr. Eger, thank you. Thank you. And to all of you for joining us this evening, thank you. So one more-

Dear Eger: Thank you.

Nancy: Reminder, to please click on the link to the evaluation. *Laila tov* and have a good night.

Dr. Eger: Thank you. Thank you. You had a wonderful interviewer. Shalom, shalom.

Nancy: Shalom, shalom.

Dr. Eger: Thank you.

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About Sharsheret

Sharsheret, Hebrew for “chain”, is a national non-profit organization, improves the lives of Jewish women and families living with or at increased genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer through personalized support and saves lives through educational outreach.

With four offices (California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), Sharsheret serves 150,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students, in all 50 states. Sharsheret creates a safe community for women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer and their families at every stage of life and at every stage of cancer - from before diagnosis, during treatment and into the survivorship years. While our expertise is focused on young women and Jewish families, more than 15% of those we serve are not Jewish. All Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.

As a premier organization for psychosocial support, Sharsheret’s Executive Director chairs the Federal Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women, Sharsheret works closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and participates in psychosocial research studies and evaluations with major cancer centers, including Georgetown University Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Sharsheret is accredited by the Better Business Bureau and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for four consecutive years.

Sharsheret offers the following national programs:

The Link Program

- Peer Support Network, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences
- Embrace™, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer • Genetics for Life®, addressing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer
- Thriving Again®, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship plans for young breast cancer survivors • Busy Box®, for young parents facing breast cancer
- Best Face Forward®, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment
- Family Focus®, providing resources and support for caregivers and family members
- Ovarian Cancer Program, tailored resources and support for young Jewish women and families facing ovarian cancer • Sharsheret Supports™, developing local support groups and programs

Education and Outreach Programs

- Health Care Symposia, on issues unique to younger women facing breast cancer
- Sharsheret on Campus, outreach and education to students on campus
- Sharsheret Educational Resource Booklet Series, culturally-relevant publications for Jewish women and their families and healthcare Professionals

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call or see your physician or other health care provider promptly. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read here.

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