

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Dr. Edith Eger

**JVN** [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by Dr. Edith Eger, a best-selling author, psychologist, and Holocaust survivor, where I ask her: How Can We Take Charge Of Our Lives? Welcome to "Getting Curious." On this week's episode we have, I mean, honestly, the most incredible guest we've ever had. You are a best selling author. You are a psychologist. You are a Holocaust survivor. Welcome to "Getting Curious," Dr. Edie Eger. How are you, Dr. Edie?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:00:44] Oh, I'm great. I'm so happy that I meet you. I know you do a lot of good. You are such an ambassador for peace, for us to finally form a human family and hold hand in hand. So I'm gonna look at you as the ambassador for peace and goodwill.

**JVN** [00:01:09] I look at you as the ambassador of peace and goodwill, and I'm-. I am. There's, I don't know if there's a word strong enough for how flattered I feel that you would say that and give me your time. So I thank you so much. You wrote a book called "The Choice." And this book details your survival story. And it also details about, you know, how you, how your story changed your outlo-, outlook on grief and healing. And your latest book, "The Gift," is a practical, inspirational guide to overcoming life's most complex challenges. And on our podcast, what I like to do is ask a question in each episode. And my question for you today, in the face of everything that is going on in the world, how can we take charge of our lives? Is my question for you today. And that's a big question. Obviously, we're in the middle of a pandemic and so many people are experiencing grief and experiencing loneliness in a, in a new way that they never have. Feeling distress in ways that they never have. And, you know, ultimately, that's just, it's just such a tough time. So I guess my first question, though, for you, specifically, is how have you been spending your time, you know, during the pandemic? Where are you? How are you? Those would be my first questions.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:02:50] Oh, this is such a good question. You know, love is not what you feel, it's what you do. And I am just very grateful that I can spend time alone and be more connected with myself. And acknowledge that I still have a choice whether I'm going to concentrate on what I don't have or find this as a time out period to take inventory of myself, to think about my thinking, because that creates my feeling. And to be more connected and more congruent. So there is a gift in everything. And I hope people re-, realize that to complain and to blame. It's okay. But it's not going to get anywhere because

you're going to be angry. And when you hold on to the anger, you suffer more. So when you're angry, I hope you're going to legitimize it. You have the right because we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. But today you are in charge of your thinking, your feeling and, of course, your behavior as well.

I understood that you are very modern, and you also like designer clothes, so I'm wearing a good shukr just for you. And I, I do dress very well. I'm also known as the Escada girl. And because, Edie, as you know, I have a lot of things with Es on it. So it's, it's, it's not what you wear really because that you can change in one day, but you cannot change your whole self, one day. So be very patient with yourself. Be a good parent to yourself. Get rid of those words like always, never. Those are dead end words. Absolute stinker words.

Just say, I'm learning something new about me. I'm developing my inner resources. And the more I suffer, the stronger I become. So there is really a way that you are able to turn tragedy into something that hopefully stretches your possibility and, and to be a survivor and not to be a victim of anything, anyone, or in any circumstance. And that's why I'm for something, rather than against, because I think forgiveness gives us an opportunity to be free. It gives ourselves a gift. I hope people can give themselves a gift right now that there never be another me, that you're one of a kind. And one person can make a difference. Look at Gandhi.

**JVN** [00:06:02] Yes. Beautiful. So you said something earlier that you are grateful for this time so that you could think about your thinking.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:06:12] Exactly.

**JVN** [00:06:13] And that's so important to think about our thinking, because one thing that you talk about is how our thoughts control our feelings. And I'm curious about what that means to you and what that means to anyone listening to this podcast.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:06:33] One of the things that are scientifically proven that the way you get up in the morning and the way you look at the mirror and look outside, the way you begin to talk to your self changes your body chemistry. So you see, you don't feel first and then think. You think first, you will, you, that's why I'm asking you to think about your thinking and then pay attention what you're paying attention to, because any behavior you pay attention to, you reinforce that behavior.

So if you tell me that I am, I am ready to lose weight, "but." I call it "yes, but" people. "Yes, but I'm pigging out on bananas-. Yes, but." Then you're never going to lose any weight unless you say, tomorrow morning, I'm not going to put sugar on my cereal. It's,

again, it's, it's not just thinking and feeling, but behaving. And no positive thinking does any good unless it's followed with a positive action.

**JVN** [00:08:00] So how can we, in the face of so much injustice.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:08:05] Yes.

**JVN** [00:08:06] And so much systematic injustice for so long, especially in the United States, because we have, this country was founded on principles of injustice and people are angry about that. So how do we face that injustice and choose positivity? And harness, harness the feeling, harness the anger and honor it, but turn it into something positive? It's much easier said than done. So how do we do it?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:08:42] I like you to look at your birth certificate. Does it say "life is easy?" No, life is not easy. Life is very hard. There is no guarantee. That is no certainty. And yet, there is probability. Probability that I'm going to give myself permission to feel the rage, to fear the anger. It's okay. I'm going through the valley of the shadow of death, but I don't camp there.

You see, I refuse to be a victim. It's. It's not really being a victim. It's being victimized. This is what is being done to us. It's up to me what I do with it. It's not what happens. It's your thinking, your attitude, your manner in which you learn to respond rather than react. So I think that's very, very important to respond rather than react. And this is the way it was in the concentration camp that I could not really afford to be angry because I had to really look at the situation right away and see how I can make it and develop my inner resources because I could be thrown into the gas chamber any minute. I was told every day I'm never going to get out of here alive. The only way I will get out of here as a, as a corpse.

And I said to myself, "When I get out of here, I'm going to see my boyfriend." When I, see they could not take away and murder my spirit. And that's what I bring you. To really, how we can empower each other with spiritual growth, because that is the body and the mind. And then there is the, other dimension. You see, we have our genes. We have the environment. I tell you how to respond to the other two. Because I cannot change your genes. I have very good genes. My ancestors were walking 40 years, and they never gave up. So I carry those genes of survivors. No matter how bad it is not to ever give up, to find their way somehow. You know, Jean-Paul Sartre talk about "no exit." And my answer would be to him, how did you get in there? You see, I used to ask in Auschwitz, "Does anyone know I'm here?" And that's why we want to unite. Because we are stronger with each other than we alone. Or you alone. And that's what you are all about. You are that ambassador uniting people and have human rights.

**JVN** [00:12:06] There is such division on the, in the United States now amongst people. And I think it's so hard for folks to put aside the things that separate us. To focus on a greater common good for everyone. What are some of the lessons that, you know, I mean, you, you said the term "inner resources." Let's go. Let's really strip it back to basics. What are inner resources? Because I think that's such a term that so many people, they're like, "Well, I don't have inner resources" But we all have inner resources.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:12:53] Yes.

**JVN** [00:12:54] Can you tell people what that means?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:12:55] I can. I think that my mother told me in the cattle car. "We don't know where we're going. We don't know what will happen. Just remember, no one can take away from you what you put in your mind." You see? And that's exactly what happened. Everything was taken away from me except the way I think. That's why it's so important to think about your thinking. As I told you, you know, where did you say that life is easy? I'm never gonna tell you life is easy. Life is difficult. It's full of surprises, full of challenges. In my book, there are no problems. There are only challenges. They are no crises, they're only transition. I look at this period that somehow I'm going to be stronger because the more I suffer, the stronger I become, the better survivor I become. But to really, really not think on the idea that life's supposed to be easy. Life is not easy. If you were in child, you can not blame. If you're still blaming, you're still a child. Children do what they feel like doing, what adults still feel like doing it, but they're not gonna do it unless it's in their best interest. I ask you to become a good parent to you. And self-love is self-care. It's not narcissistic.

**JVN** [00:14:44] I keep being a child. I keep blaming, I keep doing the blaming.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:14:48] OK.

**JVN** [00:14:49] I do. I just went through this thing in family-.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:14:52] You're still a child.

**JVN** [00:14:53] Where I did, I-. Yes, I did the blaming. So. So when you say we need to respond instead of react.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:15:02] Get off the automatic. You see, when you go on a plane and all of a sudden the pilot is avoiding all the clouds. Why? Because the pilot wants to be

where the blue sky is there. You know what? The blue sky is always there. It's what we put in between, how we talk to ourselves changes our whole body chemistry. That's why pay attention to your self-dialogue and, and see how you can become a good mommy to yourself. A good parent to yourself. Because the only one you have for a lifetime is you. All other relationships will end. Dependency breeds depression.

**JVN** [00:15:59] Mmmm.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:16:00] And don't wait for somebody to liberate you either, because people who waited in Auschwitz died. They died, they were waiting to be liberated. And in the meantime, they did not take enough care of themselves and each other. And they just died. So I come, I tell you what, I lived. And that's why I am where I am now. Because what I wrote in the book, the second book is "The Gift," is really a very practical self-help book. So become your own good loving parent to you. It, everything begins with you.

**JVN** [00:16:43] I thought that, but it's like one of those things where you really have to do it over and over. It's like you can be a good mommy to yourself.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:16:51] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:16:52] And then all of a sudden you forget and then you're blaming everybody again. And then you're like, oops, I was being a bad mommy.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:16:58] It's a pattern. P-a-t-t-e-r-n. And we have a certain pattern. And that's why we must change. Because if we don't change, we're dead. We're just not budded. Change is good. It's really good because it's time to change. You know, children don't drive anymore cars the way I did. I had a stick shift and I had to learn how to change gears. I ask you to change gears and you have to release the clutch. You cannot move on unless you release. You'll need for somebody approve of you. You have to give up the need and you give up the word "have to" because have tos are thin without which you cannot survive. We have to breathe. We have to sleep. We have to eliminate. So you see, I. I don't have to love you. I don't have to, have tos are very different from want tos. Right? They have tos and the want tos.

I want to, I want to be young and beautiful and sensuous and I want to be tall. I am not tall, I am shrinking. I am shrinking. But I'm not a shrink. I'm a stretch. I'm stretching your comfort zone. I'm asking you to stretch your comfort zone in this period of time. And I bet you, you're going to be better for it. You're going to be an ultimate survivor and you can reach out for other people as you do. And that's who you are. You are uniting people. You're not sitting home, complaining.

**JVN** [00:18:51] Yeah.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:18:52] So there are the genes. There is the environment. I take the third, how you respond to the other two. How's that?

**JVN** [00:19:02] Yes. That is the work that I do with my therapist. But if you would have heard me on the phone yesterday, you would have been like, "Honey, this is not it." We're going to take a really quick break. We'll be right back with more Edie after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious." We are back with Dr. Edith. So I want to kind of go back into some of your childhood and some of your background.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:19:30] Yes.

**JVN** [00:19:31] And you, you grew up in Hungary amidst the rise of Naziism. You were an aspiring dancer and gymnast on an Olympic trajectory, which if anyone knows anything about me, it's that I am obsessed with the Olympics. Especially gymnastics. So I kind of want to just hear about your-, you know, some of your child, your childhood before, before everything, before you experienced your trauma, before that happened. I mean, you were an aspiring young girl gymnast.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:20:09] And I am an idealist. I am very, very grateful to have the talent. I did not ever think of anything other than, than sing at a Budapest opera house. And I did not ever think, ever, for what was to come. I had no idea. I was very happy. I remembered that I was doing my choreography as I was walking to school. I was constantly thinking about dancing, performing and being a very special child of God. And then there was a knock on my door. And, you know, when I grew up as a third daughter in my family, I also was the runt. And I remember that my sister, Klara, was the, the talented violinist and Magda was playing the piano. Many people didn't even know I existed. I would say I'm Klara's sister. I didn't have a name. But then my mother looked at me very seriously and said, I'm glad that you have brains because you have no looks.

And you know what? It's very important for us to really go back, and the messages that we still carry with us, that they give us a name. You're the responsible one. You're the funny one. Just like Shakespeare, you know, put us on that, on that stage. And I became the runt, and I spent a lot of time alone. And you know what I tell you today? If you're not happy alone, you're never going to be happy with anyone else. So I think it's very, very important, again, to really be congruent, to think where your head is and, and, and see how you have a goal, that you have an arrow that you follow. Because when I came to America from Germany and there was a big, big storm in the English Channel, the guy took, took us

somewhere. I don't know where, but we didn't stay there. So don't get stuck. Don't get stuck right now. Remember, it's temporary. It's temporary. It's not permanent. And you can survive it.

It's what you do in the meantime. To write a book. It's time to write a book. People ask me, how long did it take you? And I say, a lifetime. You know? And now I have a best seller. And I'm also writing the third book with my daughter on recipes. So I'm going to have a trilogy. And I'm never gonna stop. Never gonna stop. I am going to be very happy, but I am going to be on my deathbed and I'm not going to ask, why me? I'm gonna say what way that I'm so grateful to have a beautiful, wonderful, meaningful life that I was able to hopefully give people the opportunity to also make a difference as you do.

**JVN** [00:23:58] Well, one thing that you say, which I think is incredible, is, you know, victims ask, why me? And survivors ask, what now? And for me, I think that I've spent a lot of time in. When I was in, because I think I've experienced both, I think I have asked, why me? And stayed there. I also think that I got myself, and with the help of others to the point of, as a survivor saying, well, what now? And that. And I've had experience, varying degrees of doing that independently, doing that with some support. It depends on what crisis I was weathering in my life. And I think that so many folks share that.

But I've noticed that the moments in my life where I did have a "why me" approach. When I did have, when there was an essence of that in my being, there can be this other bad thing that happens where I almost beat myself up for having that reaction anyway. And, and I guess I say that in conjunction with, can your spirit be taught or is that just something you were born with? I know you said that this is the one and this is the two. And then I show you how to respond. But I mean. Is your spirit just, like, so unique because you're just such a survivor? But no, you kind of learned how to do it. 'Cause you, at the beginning, we talked about giving yourself permission to feel the rage.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:25:37] Yes.

**JVN** [00:25:37] Give yourself permission to feel the rage.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:25:38] A wonderful word. Permission for pleasure.

**JVN** [00:25:43] So how? I think for me, what I was asking, it's like. So basically, it's like we almost need to give ourselves permission. If you're having the response of "why me"? How did this happen? How could this happen?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:25:59] The why is in the past. When you say why, why me? Well, why not me? But "why" is a problem oriented word? I like "what is going on?" What is in the present and how I'm going to move on. That I'm not revolving, but evolving. You see? I have yet to stop growing myself. See? I am in a process, climbing the mountain and I'm slipping and I'm climbing and I will never, ever stop climbing. So I have yet to arrive. If we could become good people who can talk to our selves and listen to our voices that we become a good encourager. A good encourager. Just like in a football game. "Yes, I am," or "yes, I can. Yes, yes, yes. Lot of yes, I am. Yes, I can. Yes, I will." Rather than, "I don't like that. I don't want that," you know, to be not against but to be, to have a quality and be happy. But not at someone else's expense.

**JVN** [00:27:21] Is it possible, for one person who is a survivor and is positive minded, is it possible for this person to get someone who is *not* to become more positive, if that person doesn't want to be?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:27:42] No, you cannot change another person. You cannot make them want to do anything. And again, I tell parents that children don't do what you say. They do what they see. I think of you and I hopefully can be very good role models. That, that love is something you're born with. And love and joy and passion and even purpose in life that will give you a feeling of love and satisfaction when you are on a deathbed. People who are afraid to die, they never live because fear and love does not coexist. If you have fear, I guarantee you, you're not going to have love, and neither does guilt. So you can just hopefully forgive yourself that if I knew at that time, you know, you did the best you could. And if you would have known better, of course, you would have done things very, very differently. It's very important for us to be good parents to ourselves. And hopefully that you also become a good guide.

I like to call myself a guide how to move from darkness to light. You see, I'm a dancer. I like movements. I like movements. So not to revolve, but to evolve, just like the butterfly that I'm wearing now that you have to shed the chrysalis so you can fly freely like a butterfly. But you know what? The butterfly doesn't fly right away. They rehearse. You rehearse, you rehearse. It's the way you think and what you're rehearsing to be able to shed that chrysalis. Something has to go, something you have to let go.

So ask yourself, what am I holding on to? And what I'm willing, that's a good word, what am I willing to let go of? You let go of the word "rejection" because no one can reject me but me. Rejection is just a word that people make up when you don't get what you want. It all has to do with your expectations. Because if you are idealistic and you don't get what you think you should get, you'll become cynical. Cynical is sarcastic. That's not very good humor. I like philosophical humor, good humor. But I don't buy into sarcasm or cynicism.



So, again, it all goes back. To be able to listen to your inner voices. Have a good inner dialogue and you will become the best parent to you.

**JVN** [00:31:11] I mean, I, I, I talk about in my first book about how really, like, we have to learn to be our own parent and our own cheerleader and kind of parent the inner child that has been through, that has just been through the trauma that we've been through. And I think that it's so hard to, well, it's not hard. It's just so important that we constantly come back to that relationship in ourselves. One thing that you just said that I love is it's so important that in order to grow, we have to evolve instead of revolve. And one story that you tell that I love is the story when you were teaching in El Paso and you had been awarded the Teacher of the Year and then your clinical supervisor said to you, "Edie, you got to get a doctorate." And then what happened?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:32:03] Yes. And I said it's impossible, well, because by the time I get a doctorate, I'll be 50 and he said, you will be 50 anyway. And I think I never forget that. So the chronological age doesn't mean anything. That's going to change, that you cannot stop. It's the way you look at it, that I am not smart today, I am wise. I hope to be a woman of strength, with wisdom, because life has given me so many opportunities to really stretch that part in me that I will not come from fear. I come from love no matter what the situation is, and finding a gift in everything and every one.

**JVN** [00:32:55] Dr. Edith Eger, we're gonna have you back, right after the break. Welcome back to "Getting Curious." This is Jonathan Van Ness. You are so beyond incredible. I love you so much if I can say that.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:33:12] It's very mutual. I admire you.

**JVN** [00:33:17] So pivoting to a much more serious-. I admire you too. Kind of doing a pivot here. How are, you know, obviously, I think in my adulthood, in my coming of age, I definitely think in the last ten to fifteen years. I have seen, ever, to me in my mind, it started with probably Matthew Shepard and Columbine. I feel like in the late 90s there started to be more of this hate crime and anti-Semitism and just an overall rise, rise in extremism, in so many different forms. And maybe it started before that. I don't know. I was a teenager. That's kind of when I noticed it, looking back in retrospect. But you are a survivor of, of the Holocaust, it's, it's the most atrocious, it's the biggest atrocity of modern history. And this, there is a rise in an-, anti-Semitism. I think that there is a huge rise in Islamophobia in the last 20 years in this country. There's been a continued, you know, issue with systemic racism in this country and, you know, homophobia, all sorts of different phobias and -isms against certain people for all sorts of different reasons. How are you, how do you process that? And how do we rise up against hateful extremist politics?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:35:04] I am, I tell you that God sends people my way. They don't come to me. They were sent to me. And one time, just 14 year old showed up and told me that he is a boot boy. And I looked at his boots and I acknowledged it. And then he got up and he put his elbow on my desk. And he said, I quote, "It's time for America to be white again." I'm going to kill all the Jews. All the, using the N word. All the Mexicans. And all the Chink-os. If I would have reacted, I would have dragged that boy. I would have dragged him right on the corner of my office. I would have kicked him and probably stepped on him and telling him, who do you think you're talking to? I was in Auschwitz and I saw my mother going to, to the gas chamber. But I know that God sent people my way. And my biggest enemy is my best teacher. And then I asked God, what is the meaning of that? And God told me, find the bigot in you. And I said to God, it's impossible because I came to America penniless, I didn't speak a word of English. I worked in a factory and I went to a bathroom in the one that said "colored." So I knew there is prejudice, which means to prejudge. And I joined the NAACP and I marched with Martin Luther King, and I told God that I am not a bigot and God would say find the bigot in you.

And not until I created an atmosphere that you and I do. We create an atmosphere that everybody can feel any feelings without the fear of being judged. And I get it myself. And I looked at that boy who joined a person called David Koresh, the white supremacy group. And he learned how to hate and how to be a bully because he was already on the bottom of the totem pole. His parents threw him out. He had no place to go. And I began to change that feeling into pity. And told him, tell me more. Because love is time. Time, t-i-m-e, time. He never knew a thing about my past. And I worked with him for a while. And then I referred to a man with gray hair. Because I don't think a mother can make a boy into a man. I don't think that's true either. But at the time I felt that he needed a healthy male, male role model. And so this is my story about the white supremacy that usually children who are unfortunately brainwashed to hate and have the "us and them" mentality. And I hope we can maybe just meet because there is healing in meeting.

**JVN** [00:39:02] Which I think makes this pandemic even more of a difficult time for us to really get healing because it's harder for us to meet. You know, when, I call the president 45, because I read this thing where we really shouldn't call him by his name because it gives him more publicity, which is part of what he wants. And he's such a sower of confusion and racism and xenophobia, amongst other things. So I read this thing from Coretta Scott King about, you know, call him 45 and talk about the Republican administration and the GOP that that enables him to pass these, you know, just continued things, on continue things. But going back. I remember right after he won and some of the first people that started to sound the alarm bell about certain ways that he was acting within the government and people would compare that at the time to Nazi Germany. And I

remember being, I'm from a small town in the Midwest and I have a lot of Republican family. I remember hearing that and thinking, like your, that's, I mean, this is like to compare this administration to an administration that, or to a government force that, you know, is responsible for the largest atrocity in modern history. It's, it seems like a bit of a stretch.

Over the last three years since people said that. I'm starting to realize maybe they were better future tellers than what I was in the sense that 45 has, I mean, we have concentration camps of Uighur Muslims in China that we know about and we, and we have children in the United States that are being separated from their families. We also have, I think from what I can tell, it seems like 45 is trying to instill an "us versus them" mentality and calling Democrats, you know, socialists, and the socialists are going to come get us. We just had a federal judge who was attacked at her home by a male rights lawyer. Her 20 year old son was murdered outside of a federal judge's home. These are, the, that saying of "the fish rots from the head." This president, this president has also, you know, militarized and, and used propaganda within, to stoke fears of anti-Semitism within the Democratic Party. I'm just curious about what your view in the raise in what's very much seems to be an autocratic takeover in the United States government. That does remind me, when I stud-, the history that I studied in the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany in the early 30s. Do you see similarities, do you think that there is, that there is propaganda at work here from this administration?

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:42:15] I can tell you that Ahmadinejad did not read Plato. Because he said the Holocaust did not exist. And Plato said, you have to think of a lie and it's got to be a big one. And then you repeat it, repeat it, until people believe it. So our biggest enemy is, truly, is when we are not questioning authority. And blindly adhere to authority. And that's what happens, when you read a book by Max Weber, a sociologist. When he refers, it's called Capitalism and the Protestant Ethic, and it refers to the Jewish people as a pariah. So our biggest enemy is ignorance. And I think it's, it's, it's really questioning authority and find a Hitler in you and find the judge in you, because if you want to change the world, you want to save the world, you got to look at you first. And I think it's really important at what you're doing now. How to empower each other. Hopefully.

And, and there is no such thing as, as truth. It's all subjective. It's my truth and your truth. So if you want to change someone, you change you. And to be a compassionate listener. And, and then people will look at you and say, well, I think it's better to be for something rather than fighting against and against and against. You see, it's very important, again, for us to find all that part within us that made us think what we are thinking. It's not believing on something. It's the kind of life we lead. People tell me. I believe. I believe. I believe. But I'm not interested in that. I'm more interested in what you do and, and, and the kind of life

you lead that you hopefully get up in the morning and you'll want to make the world a more peaceful, better, loving world that children cannot be separated from their parents and to be really for something because all we have is each other. And the time is now.

**JVN** [00:45:25] With this being such an important time of change and such an important time for us to come together and empower each other. What are some exer-, exercises that you could perhaps leave us with to help us promote stability in our systems and in comfort in such an uncomfortable time.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:45:51] Well, one of the things is most important is that you are evolving, not revolving. And the vocabulary that goes with that is, Yes, I am. Yes, I can. Yes, I will. And replace your negative self talk to positive self talk. So change is synonymous with growth. If you don't change, you don't grow. And also, are you ready to forgive? Because forgiveness has nothing to do with me forgiving you for what you did to me. I don't have any godly powers. But I'm going to arrange it in me to find that part in me that is holding on to the rage. And you've got to acknowledge it and not minimize it, not to forget it and not to get stuck in it because you cannot forgive without rage. You've got to go through the rage. And not to get stuck in that. So this would be the second way.

The third one is finding hope in hopelessness. To be able to say, "I don't like it. It's impossible. It's not fair." You wah. And then you say, it's temporary. And I can survive it. And it's been said, don't cover garlic with chocolate. Don't put paprika on, on my chocolate cake. You know, you've got to hopefully just say to yourself, "I had pain before and I'm here and now I'm a victimized someone, I am not a victim. It's not who I am. It's what was done to me." So I give you three things. Let me repeat. It's you evolve rather than revolve. To be able to recognize that forgiveness is, is a gift that you give to you, that you're not a hostage and a prisoner of the past. And the third one is finding hope in hopelessness. And you should say to yourself that somehow it's hurting and I will decide how long will I hold on to that pain and to able to know that the definition of love is the ability to let go.

**JVN** [00:48:47] Wow. Last question. You are a. Your energy and your outlook is unparalleled. At this point in your life, what are you working on and what are you excited about? What are you hopeful for? And when I say, like, what are you, what are you still kind of working on when you're like-? Well, what are you working on? All of it. Emotionally. Internally. All of it. Tell me everything.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:49:23] All of it. Yes. I do get up in the morning. And I'm so grateful to be alive at 92. I live in a present. I think young. But I'm not young, I'm foolish. You see? And I think I'm very happy with my age. Something I cannot change is my chronological age. It's

going to help me anyway. I don't pay attention to that. Those are numbers. I feel younger today than I did 50 years ago. I can tell you that for sure. I'm very selective who is going to get my anger. Because while I'm angry at you, you're not hurting. I am. So you see, it's, I want a me to be that is congruent. That is connected well, to, to enjoy every moment. Because we don't appreciate what we have many times until we lose it. I eat everything. If you invite me for lunch, I eat my food. And if you leave anything on your plate, I'm going to eat it or take it home. I can't stand throwing every, even a little piece of bread.

The past is in the present. The past is in the present. But I don't get stuck in there. I don't run away from Auschwitz anymore. And I know that when a woman told me that, I can tell you I was sexually abused, but I cannot tell you because you were in Auschwitz. And my answer to her was, you were more in Auschwitz because I knew the enemy. So I think it's really important how you look at things. How you look at things as an opportunity. For an opportunity to discover my inner resources. I'm stronger now. I am happy to celebrate every moment in my life. And people don't come to me, they're sent to me and I'm never going to retire. I'm going to retire a retirement. And not to worry about the chronological age, it's just a number. There. So I want to be grateful to you that we had this dialogue. It's wonderful to have a dialog. I hope we can meet and heal and sit on the floor and munch on wonderful Hungarian food. I make a good one.

**JVN** [00:52:15] I would love nothing more.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:52:17] Yes.

**JVN** [00:52:18] I would love that.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:55:19] Yes.

**JVN** [00:55:20] I would love that.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:55:21] We'll make a date.

**JVN** [00:55:20] Thank you so much.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:55:22] Thank you.

**JVN** [00:55:23] I would love to. We have to do that in real life. I mean, you're just amazing. So, Dr. Edie Eger, thank you so much for your time today and we love you so much. And thank you for coming on "Getting Curious."

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:55:39] Thank you for inviting me.

**JVN** [00:55:41] Thank you.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:55:01] You just made my day. Thank you. God bless you.

**JVN** [00:55:47] Thank you. And you too.

**DR. EDITH EGER** [00:55:50] Thank you.

**JVN** [00:55:52] You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Dr. Edith Eger. She's a best-selling author, psychologist, and Holocaust survivor. Her new book "The Gift" is out this month.

You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on.

Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thanks to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend - show them how to subscribe.

Follow us on Instagram & Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our socials are run and curated by Emily Bossak.

Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, Emily Bossak, Chelsea Jacobson, and Colin Anderson.