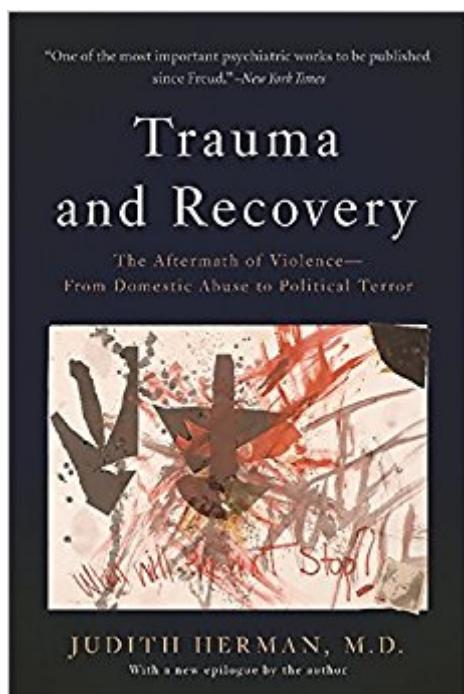


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Trauma And Recovery: The Aftermath Of Violence--From Domestic Abuse To Political Terror



Synopsis

When Trauma and Recovery was first published in 1992, it was hailed as a groundbreaking work. In the intervening years, Herman's volume has changed the way we think about and treat traumatic events and trauma victims. In a new afterword, Herman chronicles the incredible response the book has elicited and explains how the issues surrounding the topic have shifted within the clinical community and the culture at large. Trauma and Recovery brings a new level of understanding to a set of problems usually considered individually. Herman draws on her own cutting-edge research in domestic violence as well as on the vast literature of combat veterans and victims of political terror, to show the parallels between private terrors such as rape and public traumas such as terrorism. The book puts individual experience in a broader political frame, arguing that psychological trauma can be understood only in a social context. Meticulously documented and frequently using the victims' own words as well as those from classic literary works and prison diaries, Trauma and Recovery is a powerful work that will continue to profoundly impact our thinking.

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Customer Reviews

Advance Praise for Adventures in Human Being; From shell shock in World War I to childhood sexual abuse today, the reality of trauma has been denied. But as this indispensable book makes clear, "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims." -Gloria

Judith Herman, M.D., one of this country's leading experts on trauma and abuse, is professor of clinical psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, and director of training at the Victims of Violence Program at Cambridge Hospital. She is also a founding member of the Women's Mental Health Collective in Massachusetts. Herman was the recipient of the 1996 Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

This book helped me change my life. I realized a bit late in life (50ish) that I'd been dissociating for most of my life. Seemingly from trauma as a baby and child. Judith Herman writes this book with such love, and nurturing and caring. I read it very slowly, with a highlighter. I could only read it a bit at a time, to give myself time to process. The book helped me understand things that had been mysteries to me my entire life! I hadn't made the PTSD connection before. Life has a way of illuminating things. At first, I wanted to track Dr. Herman down and see her for a few sessions. Too bad I don't have that kind of money :-) I found a PTSD group via MeetUps, and started working with the therapist who runs it and offers a sliding scale. I'm an integrated and joyful person these days.

Incredible book. I am reading it for a course in clinical treatment for trauma. The book is an extra-ordinary, moving, tour de force that moves elegantly from the history of the idea of trauma (its origins in French studies of hysteria) through the "discovery" of PTSD with war veterans to the feminist uncovering of rape, domestic violence, and child abuse. Herman argues that although medical professionals and society recognize that some people suffer from a malady of depression, anxiety, uncontrolled fear, dissociation, and pain they are not always willing to give this condition a name or to treat it unless a political movement comes along and makes the case that an entire group of neglected people is suffering and deserves help. At any given time there are some groups (vets) whose suffering is recognized while another group (women or children) whose suffering is not recognized or whose symptoms are pathologized or repressed or ignored. At the present moment, I think Dr. Herman would agree, the study of trauma has expanded past the first two groups (war veterans and women/children) to include refugees, immigrants, and minorities in an oppressive political system. This book is beautifully written--it is both academic and intellectual, and accessible to people who are suffering and want to understand their own experience more.

Wonderful book. My interest in developmental trauma is personal having grown up with a Borderline

abusive mother and a jealous, bully of a sister who tormented me from day one. They couldn't have done a better job of damaging me in tandem if they tried. Now I try to help others who have no idea why their lives are a "mess" with the depression, anxiety, panic, and low self-esteem. IT FINALLY MAKES SENSE! Thank you, dear Ms. Herman. (And Bessel van der Kolk)!!

I enjoyed reading this text. It reads more like a professional in the field conversing about her experience in the field of trauma counseling rather than a dry informational piece. I feel that if you can engage the readers in the material without sacrificing accuracy of information, you can reach a much wider audience with the material than you would with something super formal with a very high reading level. The book does a fine job of getting the reader to visualize the experience of being a traumatized individual, and of the barriers encountered in getting the help and closure needed. This will be one of the books I hang onto and read again.

I read this book a while back in my undergraduate program. Since then, I have been trained as an EMDR therapist and to reread the book with the EMDR lens is a new way to approach this fundamental work in the field of trauma. This is a solid work that will help readers understand trauma treatment and ways to approach those who have suffered unspeakable events.

This book was instrumental in providing me with a lot of insights that changed the way I understand misfortune. Many intellectuals who borrowed from psychoanalysis, including Erich Fromm, Kleinians and others I read whilst studying for my thesis, implied indirectly that the symptoms of trauma were a result of moral failure. Indeed, I was only reminded of the nature of this association last night, when I watched the World War One drama, DOWNTOWN ABBEY. What can be worse than being killed? To be killed for cowardice. So a household servant is informed that her relative died in the war, but it was "worse than that". The ideology of "moral fiber" that is central to the 19th Century has not been overturned by the early part of the next. Rather, there was a notion that some possessed moral fiber, whereas others did not. You would be able to see this ideology regarding the all-conquering character who makes no excuses, in Nietzsche. I'd like to think that my thesis on Marechera, who also has much of the Nietzschean spirit of wanting to conquer the world, but in an entirely different context, which did not permit permanent or definitive success, corrects previous suppositions about the structures of the psyche. The ability to persist in dangerous situations is certainly laudable, however, in contradiction to the 19th Century view we must now assume that such determination to persist when all the odds are against one will take its toll on the mind. This

extraction of a cost nothing to do with anyone's innate capacity to follow through on an extremely difficult task. Rather, as we know today, everybody, even the strongest, has a breaking point. Some people may last longer than others under extreme duress, but more those of more rational views would frame this as a psychological issue, not a moral one*. Judith Herman puts everything into context when she shows that those who suffer from trauma suffer not from their own limitations but from the limitations of those who should be part of their nearest communities. To take a brave risk is one thing, but if your community doesn't back you up, you are probably going to suffer from psychological trauma. Herman is certainly not suggesting a hippy-dippy attitude, where "community" is the answer to all wrongs. Rather, what she seems to suggest is that we are all interconnected. If you withdraw the human connection -- that is, the lifeline -- from somebody who has taken a risk, they are going to feel more in danger. The betrayal of trust will compute, at a psychological level, as trauma. So it's not that the particular individual from whom you withdrew your moral support has some intrinsic moral lack. The origin of the trauma is that you withdrew your support.

-----*These days we seem to have flipped into biologism which, on the surface at least, seems exactly the opposite of the 19th Century view. In other words, biological "reasons" are invoked for people to take various chemicals to make them "normal". The problem is no longer a moral one, but one pertaining to one's unique, individual biological make-up. This view is as false as the 19th Century one -- even if it seems to offer the sufferer less difficulty in the short-term -- because the demand to unquestioningly conform to social norms remains as an unethical pressure.

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