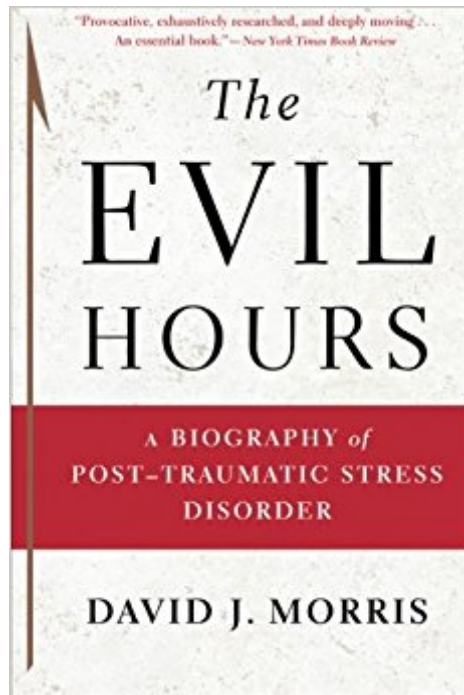




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The Evil Hours: A Biography Of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



Synopsis

“Conveys the mysteries of trauma in a way that is unsurpassed in the literature. This is the most important book on the subject to come out in this century.”
• Times Literary Supplement
“Compulsively readable.”
• Los Angeles Times
Post-traumatic stress disorder haunts America today, its reach extending far beyond the armed forces to touch the lives of millions of us. In *The Evil Hours*, David J. Morris shares stories of people living with PTSD—including himself—and investigates the rich scientific, literary, and cultural history of the condition. The result is a humane, unforgettable book that has been hailed as a literary triumph, and an indispensable account of an illness.
“[*The Evil Hours*] reminded me why I wanted to be a writer in the first place. Communicate[s] the reality of PTSD, both to those who live with it and those who never have.”
• David Brooks, New York Times
“Engaging. Timely. A fascinating and well-researched narrative.”
• Chicago Tribune
“This is the book we’ve always needed. A work that empowers and connects people like never before. Anyone who has been touched by PTSD would benefit greatly from this book.”
• Foreign Policy

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Los Angeles Times Book Prize Finalist
A New York Times Book Review Editor’s Choice
“THE EVIL HOURS is a provocative, exhaustively researched and deeply moving analysis of traumatic memory and how we make sense of it—an essential book not just for those who have

experienced trauma, but for anyone who wants to understand post-9/11 America. Reading it will make you a better and more humane citizen." — New York Times Book Review "The Evil Hours, by David Morris—at once a patient and fine writer—conveys the mysteries of trauma in a way that is unsurpassed in the literature...this is the most important book on the subject to come out in this century." — Times Literary Supplement — "A lucid etiology — Well-integrated autobiographical elements make this remarkable work highly instructive and readable. — Publishers Weekly, STARRED Review — "An exploration of the enduring human cost of war...An eye-opening investigation of war's casualties. — Kirkus — "Morris brings not just experience but insight to a topic of grave relevance...The takeaway is a durable resource for both those with PTSD and their loved ones. — Donna Chavez, Booklist — "Even today, the PTSD label is often misunderstood and misapplied, with the average reader seeing it as something that only affects veterans and rape victims (which is decidedly not the case). What a relief, then, to have Morris's stunning writing and thorough research to make sense of it. As a former Marine, Morris writes vividly about life during and after war; and he also turns his eye towards the trauma that can arise from other categories including sexual assault and near-death experiences. — Flavorwire — "The Evil Hours: A Biography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an engaging exploration of, and a timely resource on, the affliction first known in modern times as shell shock. David J. Morris, a former Marine who covered the Iraq war until he was involved in an explosion, uses his own experiences, literary accounts of war, and interviews with veterans, rape survivors and psychiatrists to weave a fascinating and well-researched narrative about psychological trauma and the American treatment of it. — Chicago Tribune — "Morris has found himself in a position to help us think about PTSD with much more complexity than we're accustomed to, and in so doing The Evil Hours takes an important and timely place in our culture. — Minneapolis Star Tribune — "David Morris, a war journalist and former Marine officer, delivers a compassionate, approachable examination of post-traumatic stress in The Evil Hours — It is a book that already has cut a wide swath in the world of military veterans and others. — The Oregonian — "A brave and honest memoir of living in terror's shadow, as well as a definitive account of the history, culture and science of the great affliction of our era — The Evil Hours is a gift of insight for survivors of combat stress and traumatic events of all kinds, as well as a call to action for the vast majority of Americans untouched by the brutality of more than 13 years at war. — San Diego Union-Tribune —

"David J. Morris invites us into his own heart of darkness in order to deliver an unflinching and compassionate study of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is far more than a biography of a psychological condition, or a memoir of one individual, it is also a cogent analysis of an ever increasing phenomenon that has changed the landscape of our culture. If one has any hope of coming to grips with what shapes America every day, *The Evil Hours* is a must read."

• Alice Sebold, author of *The Lovely Bones*

"Trauma destroys the normal narrative of life," Morris explains in this impassioned, well-researched, and beautifully written biography of an illness that we've only recently realized is an illness. Though he hates the idea of turning writing into therapy, reading his book has helped this fellow sufferer. *The Evil Hours* is a much needed narrative.

• Ismet Prcic, author of *Shards*

"Masterful and moving, David Morris's investigation of this troubling psychiatric disorder asks all the important questions. This book honors suffering while also making room for hope."

• Emily Bazelon, author of *Sticks and Stones*

"A beautiful book, the non-fiction brother of Phil Klay's *Redeployment*. Read it."

• Tom Ricks, author of *Fiasco* and *The Generals*

"This book has the hypnotic appeal of authenticity. David J. Morris is a writer, warrior, and sufferer, his words carry an inescapable truth. His story glides through the drifting incredulity of trauma, terrible memories, and the struggling science of comprehension. There is something addictive in his way of drawing you in. *The Evil Hours* is fascinating uncovering of the mind, unnervingly profound."

• Joe Simpson, author of *Touching the Void*

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Nearly fifty years ago I was an Army Medic (MOS_91_C) who served over two years in what is now called a 20 bed trauma intensive care unit located in Camp Zama Japan ... the US Army Central Command location. This trauma unit was always full ... there were rarely empty beds. The patients arriving were unstable wounded soldiers being evacuated out of Vietnam; all types of wounds which could be expected in combat except for burns were treated in our unit. The high esprit d'corps experienced by all of our staff ... top to bottom ... was of the type hinted at in the TV series MASH. At the end of my enlistment I consciously strived to place my part in creating what was being done to the Vietnamese people as far as possible from my mind and my hoped-for post war life. I did not expect gratitude; nor did I experience any American gratitude. My biggest lifetime error of bio-psychic-social existence was my presupposition that I had not been wounded i.e. traumatized by

my US Army service. I spend nearly 5000 hours in a river of human trauma and I never saw that I had become one of them ... my service buddies. I still cry when I recall the death of Clyde Wenrick, a young warrior who had been shot in the gut and had lived with and been cared for by us for months ... on and off the verge of death. I was sucking his recently eaten breakfast of eggs and bacon out of his abdomen ... he was holding the hands of one of the women corpmen and looking at her face. He said: I love you Mommy; and he quietly died. It was only after having read "The Evil Hours" that I find that I can hold and tolerate the FACT that I too had been wounded and traumatized in my work to care for others. My life, my mind and my body had been altered without my permission. And I've lived with that without understanding and without compassion for myself. These realities contaminated my ability to be present in relationships and to comprehend what my body was saying to me in situations which required a full appreciation of what others are asking of me. The term "at ease" was a command the military used frequently in training and group actions. Well, I now find that I am "at ease" in my own skin and can be kinder and more considerate for those who have led similar lives and who might not quite grasp with any clarity what has happened to them ... and by that I mean whether or not their distress had any active service roots.

While there is no shortage of books and other material on post-traumatic stress disorder, *The Evil Hours* breaks new ground. As a former marine, author David J. Morris not only has personal experience with post-traumatic stress disorder but also spent an extensive amount of time reviewing previous work in the field as well as interviewing people who currently struggle with PTSD. He also looked at popular culture and the representations of PTSD in movies, literature, etc. In addition to all of this, he added his own perspective. The result is a vivid and gripping work, one which deserves a wide readership. The individuals Morris met included not only war veterans but rape survivors and those who'd gone through near death experiences. Their personal accounts and statements are extremely moving, revealing the challenges they face daily. Morris discovered that those with PTSD may also be more likely to become violent, suffer from extreme anxiety, a sense of alienation, and loneliness. Without treatment, the effects can be lasting. Those with post-traumatic stress disorder not only face great personal challenges but also may be unable to function well at work, in their marriages - and as members of their communities. One of Morris's goals in writing *The Evil Hours* was to understand how the "current war on post-traumatic stress is being waged". He also looked at past information about PTSD. Then he assimilated it all and arrived at his own conclusions. Some of those conclusions were ones I hadn't read before - and I've read quite a bit about PTSD. Morris acknowledges that he was also partly motivated to write the book for personal reasons, to grasp

why his world seemed so different after his return from Iraq and to grapple with his feelings of alienation. But he brings in larger issues as well, including recent treatments and therapies, resulting in a balanced combination of both personal and wider information. I was surprised and also encouraged by learning of positive change which can (eventually) occur after suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. One individual felt that PTSD "recalibrated" his values and gave him an opportunity to reassess his life and move in a better direction. And Morris found other examples of those who felt that extreme stress had led to both great suffering and - in time- opportunities for personal growth and a new beginning. Unfortunately, he also discovered that society often considered post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers to be "broken", possibly leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy from survivors who accepted others' perceptions as the truth. Of course a single review can't possibly list all of the topics covered in *The Evil Hours* but I hope I've included enough here to compel potential readers to obtain a copy of the book. In addition to the introduction, main chapters, and epilogue, there are detailed notes on studies, books, articles, and other material related to each chapter. There is also a bibliography for those who want to seek out more information on PTSD.

Absolutely essential for anyone seeking to understand what has become a contemporary shibboleth. I'd read *The Emperor of All Maladies* a few years prior, which was billed as a "biography of cancer." Similar things can be (and I'm sure have been) said about this book. Morris uses his personal story as a framework from which to investigate PTSD. He focuses primarily (almost exclusively, though not quite) on military PTSD, and in particular the American experience with it, though he does acknowledge the reasons (its overwhelming prevalence among veteran populations in America, the fact that it's been studied extensively by the Veterans Administration, and its accessible narrative qualities) and also includes a story of a woman suffering PTSD in the aftermath of sexual assault. The medical lineage is interesting but not nearly as engaging as the literary heritage of PTSD, especially in the Western canon. His bibliography and notes are a treasure trove of further reading, though sticking just to *Evil Hours* provides a reader with a thorough and comprehensive understanding. I think Morris could have spent some more time exploring, if only briefly, some of the populations he mentions as surviving PTSD (natural disasters, sexual assault, refugees), but this is a small suggestion. His writing is engaging and open, neither overly academic nor simplistic. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the subject of PTSD, literature, or the human condition.

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