

A Vision of Pansophical Lens in Dave Pelzer's *Help Yourself*

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Abstract

This paper explores how Dave Pelzer's universal wisdom is attained through the nurturing of his inner fortitude. Two fundamental concepts, Hope and Hate, significantly influence human existence by shaping the decision-making process and guiding individuals in their choices. Individuals may recognize that there is no inherent flaw in enduring hardships; as such experiences facilitate the identification of one's interior self through a comprehensive perspective. Understanding the inner self and erecting courage and faith incentivize people to break the obstacles and be able to confront any challenges. Dave Pelzer is an inspiration to all the folks who endeavor to improve themselves. His traumatic experiences during infancy catalyze his resilience, enabling him to persevere and emerge as a source of inspiration for others. His unwavering conviction and capacity for forgiveness constitute the core of his achievements. He courageously confronted the repercussions and cultivated his inner fortitude. This Self-Help book highlighted many legendaries who rose from coercion and became a source of inspiration to all the budding people.

Keywords: Resilience, Odium, Credence, Remission, Fortitude.

A Self-Help book is denoted as Self-improvement. It is a genre of non-fiction written for people who seek to improve themselves. Self-Help book named as a fair few of man-made, self-made, self-growth, and so on. This book is more constructive for a person's psychological upheaval. This tends to change people's negative experiences into positive ones and help them to uplift their personality traits. The catchphrases for Self-Help are Aesop's Self-help is the best help, Bruce Lee's Ultimately the greatest help is Self-help, Ralph Waldo Emerson's The best help is self-help, Epictetus's The best place to get help is from yourself, Samuel Smiles' The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual, The Proverb of Swedish's The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your arm.

Self-Help books help folks relieve their psychological distress. This book contains both positive and negative critical claims. Some critics have claimed that Self-Help books have become an addiction to readers. Commonly, there is nothing wrong with getting addicted to Self-Help books, rather than being bound in wrongdoings. The Self-Help book is greatly embellished on the people's side. Because it helps the readers to rise from the fall, it turns confusion into clarity, and negative into positive. Readers can get a new hope in their life by reading Self-Help books and it is worthwhile.

The honorary award for Self-Help Books is the Benjamin Franklin Award, which motivated the authors and the readers. In 2024, the Benjamin Franklin Award for Self-Help Books Mary Morrissey's *Brave Thinking: The Art and Science of Creating a Life You Love* received a Gold Medal. Then, two writers received Silver Medals; one is Alexandra H. Solomon's *Love Every Day: 365 Relational Self-Awareness Practices to Help Your Relationship Heal, Grow, and Thrive* and the last one is Dr. Robyne Hanley's *Stress Wisely: How to Be Well in an Unwell World* (IBPA, 2024). Benjamin Franklin played a major role in self-improvement. He wrote 13 virtues of self-improvement for creating a better personality for people. He mentioned the equation for self-improvement which is noted as the progress of growth in human life. "Equation for self-improvement: curiosity + writing = self-improvement" (Jawwad, 2022).

Many writers have dedicated their lives to writing books for readers to solve problems on their own. They are Viktor Frankl, Robert T. Kiyosaki, Napoleon Hill, Malcolm Gladwell, Brené Brown, and so on. Like these writers, Dave Pelzer also dedicated his life to helping others to solve themselves. Dave Pelzer wrote three Self-Help Books namely, *Help Yourself* (2001), *Help Yourself for Teens* (2005), and *Moving Forward* (2009). This paper is about Dave Pelzer's pansophical view through the lens of one of his Self-help book *Help Yourself*. *Help Yourself* is a New York Times bestselling book. "This book encourages readers to eliminate destructive baggage from their past while transforming their negative experiences into a fulfilling, productive future and direct the readers how to survive and overcome the difficulties" (Dave Pelzer - Books). Dave used the word "Hope" constantly as a lens of his primary context of the sources that included this work.

There are elite writers from Forbes who similarly mention the key concepts of the author. Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Self-Reliance* (1841) is about how people should rely on their judgment and the choices they make. Kristin Neff's *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* (2015) about self-criticism is a wise choice to motivate people and teaches us to be kind to ourselves. James Clear's *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits &*

Break Bad Ones (2018) insists a small habit can change a person into a better personality. Stacey Abrams's *Lead from the Outside: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change* (2019) encourages people to devote their passion to work and cross the hurdle strongly. Eric Thomas's, *You Owe You: Ignite Your Power, Your Purpose, and Your Why* (2022), encourages us to be an inspiration for ourselves and make self-improvement. Mariel Buqué's *Break the Cycle: A Guide to Healing Intergenerational Trauma* (2024) helps people to stop the trauma and gives them strength to relieve the pain (Fitzgerald, 2024).

Dave Pelzer endured child abuse from his biological mother. The heart-reckoned pain was prolonged year after year in his mind and heart. He was rescued from torture on March 5, 1973, with the help of social workers, teachers, and the principal of the school. He was accepted as the ward of the court until the age of 17. Abiding by the law, the child who is 18 should leave the foster home and live an independent life, which causes heavy stress at a young age. His trilogy dealt with destructive life and traumatic experiences. After enduring tremendous hardships, he built his personality with a ray of hope. The light of the beacon rises inside his body to support victims, like him, who endured various tortures. He decided to live a better life and wanted to make others the same. "Because of my childhood experience, all I desired was a better life for myself" (Pelzer, 2001, p.27). He became a volunteer to help the victims, in juvenile halls, and started a travelogue to give motivation to the people who need help. "Today, I focus on applying myself to help others so they will not have to suffer the same treatment as my brothers and I did" (Pelzer, 2001, p.33). Dave became a motivational speaker, author, victim, narrator, protagonist, etc.

Light started to be lit from his body. A fearful person becomes a stream of hope for others. In *Help Yourself*, Dave Pelzer writes the book into three separate sections for the readers to evaluate themselves, *Get Rid of the Garbage in Your Life*, *Know What You Want out of Your Life*, and *Celebrate Who You Are and What You Have*. Dave says everyone has a problematic life and no one has a perfect life. Dave highlighted the famous talk show person of US Oprah Winfrey who says with low self-esteem "Now that you know better, do better" (Pelzer, 2001, p.8).

Dave Pelzer found the same stream lit up in Oprah Winfrey's soul as well. People cannot solve all problems according to their wishes. The problem will surely frustrate people, and that is life. "Since we will never be able to change everything in our world to our liking, we have to learn to adjust and make the most of what we have" (Pelzer, 2001, p.42). Pelzer says that many people have locked their problems into their hearts. Only by letting out the problem can they feel better, self-reliant, and independent. "Have the courage to purify yourself of whatever may be holding you back" (Pelzer, 2001, p.24). Keep on doing work without hesitation which stimulates our strength multiple times. Similarly, whenever people tend to fall, they should be ready to fight until they can stand. Dave Pelzer gives three options to handle a negative environment which are to accept, leave, or adapt to the environment. Pelzer says it is the people's choice what they want to become. "But even with the best of surroundings, it is the individual who decides his or her own fate" (Pelzer, 2001, p.28).

From Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural, chapter 43, The Possession of Knowledge, Kural 422 explained not to lead the mind wherever it goes; it should protect from evil and direct to go in the right path is wisdom. It suits confronting negative surroundings and circumstances.

Wisdom checks the straying senses

Expels evils, impels goodness. - 422 (Kalyanasundaram, 2021)

If people want to overcome the past, do nothing, learn from it, and move forward. The author highlighted the pop star legend and super diva Tina Turner, who overcame an abusive marriage. She is abused by the drug-addicted husband physically, mentally, and spiritually. She frees herself and bounces back to her career. Therefore, people should not dwell on the problem and find ways to overcome it. Don't please others. The author endured severe abuse as a child with severe abuse in his younger days; at home, he tried to please his mother by doing all chores to make his mother love him. While living in a foster home, he stole candy bars from stores to gain the acceptance of his friends. But no one liked Dave. Both from the biological home and foster home, his perseverance became vain. So, he concluded there is no need to please others. "You may be liked by others for a while, but only as long as you have something they want from you" (Pelzer, 2001, p.38). So, people should do their best to survive and never expect others to help them. "However, in the end, it is you and you alone who have to do whatever it takes to accomplish your goal. Not your teacher, your parents, those at work, your spiritual leader, close friends, spouse, master, motivator, guru, or psychic advisors. It's you!" (Pelzer, 2001, p.92).

Dave's inspiring words and strong personality encourage people to uplift their personalities. "To help yourself, you have to be yourself. Be the best person you can possibly be. When you make a mistake or feel beaten down, learn from the situation and pick yourself up" (Pelzer, 2001, p.40). Making up and maintaining ourselves is the main aura for being a better person. Therefore, people should be concerned about making choices in their lives. His mother referred to him as "The Boy" and "It". His mother wishes him to deserve punishment for his sin. Dave endured his childhood full of post-traumatic stress. He wished the people to do their best ceaselessly whatever problems arose. Endless fighting and not giving up are the spirit of overcoming any hurdles in human life. "When dealing with those close to me, I have learned that sometimes the smallest things – a touch, a hug, or a kind word – can make a world of difference. Resolve the matter before it envelopes you. Before your feelings become ensconced ... and perhaps lead to hate" (Pelzer, 2001, p.63).

Like Dave Pelzer, some remarkable people have shed light on many lives. They are Nick Vujicic, Stephen Hawking, Yuzuru Hanyu, Muniba Mazari, Oprah Winfrey, Jessica Cox, etc. They rise from heavy falls and become a source of inspiration for everyone. So, there is nothing wrong with enduring hardships; it makes people strong enough to be courageous and wise to reach a high. "Of all the lessons I have been fortunate enough to learn, the single most powerful, most important one is: Hate no one!" (Pelzer, 2001, p.63). Hate is an antagonist of Hope. The pansophical vision exhibits the objection to Hate. Dave's mother was spoiled by hate; she hated herself and her family, friends, neighbors, and so on. The hostile hate transforms a lovable den mother into a devil mother. "I believe hate is like cancer: it can spread and kill a person, one life cell, one day, at a time" (Pelzer, 2001, p.63). If it is unchecked, it will ruin people's lives step by step. He addressed an article from a national magazine about letting go of hate. A person named Mitchell Wright lost his wife in a school shooting who was a teacher. The couple has a baby boy named Zane. Mitchell says, "If you let the hate and anger build in you, that's a very strong sin. I need to be able to totally forgive. Well if I lost it, then I can't take care of Zane" (Pelzer, 2001, p.64). This paper propounds the author's motive which is that before killing others, the cancer (Hate) will kill us first. Another person, Charlotte Witvliet who is a professor of Psychology at Hope College, talked about forgiveness. This benefits people, both physically and emotionally. "Forgiveness allows you to be cleansed and helps to ease your pain" (Pelzer, 2001, p.72).

There is a song named *Hate is a Disease* that begins with "There is hope left inside of you..." (Brojob, 2017) which implicates the disease of hate. The researcher cynosures Eddie Jaku's historical life as a Holocaust survivor teaches people how to avoid hating. He is a writer of "The Happiest Man on Earth". He says *Hate is a disease and it is our first enemy* (Naf Daily, 2019). The hate will end up in people's lives ruining everything. "Unresolved issues, bad situations, and feelings of animosity over time became a habitual lifestyle. These individuals, like my mother, became consumed with their own hate" (Pelzer, 2001, p.65).

On many occasions, people can hate others easily. Sometimes hate becomes a threat to society like World War which destroys many people's lives. There are discrepancies between people and countries that are racial, cultural, economic, etc. Hate killed the people and society. "Do not become trapped by your hatred. My mother died a very lonely person" (Pelzer, 2001, p.67). So, the author requests the people to forgive and free themselves. Forgiveness became the solution for Hate. "To me, forgiveness does not mean forgetting what may have happened to or against you. And, like grieving, forgiveness takes time just like any emotion" (Pelzer, 2001, p.69). This cannot happen in one night and takes some time. With the help of people's perspective, time, and maturity, by avoiding Hate, people can overcome suffering and traumatic experiences and relieve themselves. "Noted psychologist Bernie Zilbergeld echoes my thoughts. Mr. Zilbergeld states: Holding a grudge is one of the most self-destructive things you can do. If you want to have a happy life, you have to move on and let go" (Pelzer, 2001, p.70). Dave learned from his mother how to not live a life like her. "Maybe I had to learn from Mother's unfortunate lifestyle how not to live my life. Keep in mind that for someone to hurt you, someone must have hurt them too" (Pelzer, 2001, p.70). The United Nations and the Kingdom of Morocco jointly organized an occasion of Countering and Addressing Hate Speech for "Investing in the Power of Youth" (Francis, 2024) to stop violence like hate. Through this speech, the UN focused on creating the impact of protecting Human Rights, Gender Equality, and supporting Children and Youth. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres says, "Hate speech is an alarm bell – the louder it rings, the greater the threat of genocide. It precedes and promotes violence" (United Nations, Say #NoToHate). In preventing the role of education, the United Nations found the root cause of violence which started from hate. They decided to influence education to maintain a peaceful environment and applied an agenda for prevention. "The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech emphasize the transformative power of education as a tool to address this phenomenon's root causes and drivers. It seeks to promote peaceful, inclusive, and just societies for all, in line with the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals" (United Nations, The Preventive Role of Education). Chiefly hinged hate is the blood-sucking tool for mankind. The author says don't hate anyone and he wishes people to clean the psychological garbage daily to maintain a healthy relationship. "Not caring if anyone heard me, I stated, No matter what happens from this moment on, I am going to give everything my best shot. No matter what happens ... from this moment on, I will never, ever quit" (Pelzer, 2001, p.84). The hope gives a strong personality to Dave to learn to overcome and sustain. The direction of hope circulates the human personality to continue their life cycle to move forward. With the help of hope, Dave realized there was a need to act to better himself, not only one time but on every occasion. "...what is stopping you from achieving your desires? My intention is to help you realize the indomitable human spirit within us all" (Pelzer, 2001, p.84). Confidence should be built in ourselves. The situation may go wrong and be challenging, but it gives experience to the people to learn, endure, and overcome. "To achieve what you want, you do what you have to do! Don't you quit on what's important to you. Don't give up on yourself!" (Pelzer, 2001, p.87, 95, 96). This paper examined that it is in people's attitudes whether to become a Prisoner of War or fight like a warrior. "All of us have had and will continue to face issues in our lives for the rest of our lives. Nothing and no one on this planet can stop it. It's a fact of life" (Pelzer, 2001, p.87). Pelzer says even if he had an opportunity to change his fate, he didn't wish to change but rather challenge.

If I had the opportunity I would not change one moment of one day of my life. Not one! My experiences enabled me to become stronger inside, independent, and determined to make something out of myself. My challenges gave me a different

perspective on life and made me want it more. (Pelzer, 2001, p.98) To handle challenges, trust is a strong foundation for human life. Belief played a vital role in enumerating inspirational legends. Self-realization was lit up from this stage to act accordingly by the people to challenge the changes.

“Author studied one American officer who built a house in his head. This person began by formulating a blueprint in his mind. Next, he laid the foundation, built the frame, and visualized every beam, and every window, and didn’t stop until he had imagined himself placing every room with the exact furniture” (Pelzer, 2001, p.87). The strong belief makes him do it boldly. The officer pursued without any regret and had faith in his goal. This paper explores a similar context portrayed by a strong belief in the great epic or Purana named Sekkizhaar’s *Periya Puranam*, in English translated by G.Vanmikanathan. The saint Pusalar built the temple for Shiva in his heart. The strong belief turns a miracle into reality (Sekkizhaar, 2000). Dave believes in himself and maintains his focus to better himself.

When he listened to the king, the servitor looked at

The king in bewilderment, and said: “Ha! The Lord

Had deemed even me as worthy and graced me.

For lack of the wherewithal, I but built a temple

Here in my mind.” Then he explained to the king

How he planned and built the temple in his mind. (4185)

-The Puranam of Poosalar Nayanar

This paper highlights Jessica Cox as an example of the author’s words of challenges, belief, hope, and existence. Jessica Cox is the World’s first licensed armless pilot, also the first armless black belt in the American Taekwondo Association. She crossed over all the hardships and placed a strong desire for achievement. She founded the Rightfooted Foundation International (RFI), a non-profit mission to help all armless children. “With the right mindset, anything is possible, and no obstacle is too great to overcome” (Cox, 2024). So, not backing up or striving to keep on encouraging ourselves is the best hope. Overall, hope will give the courage to folks to face any challenges, struggles, hardships, etc. Hope is the solution to hardships and Hate is the reason for hardships. It is in our hands whether to stop or go ahead. No one can stop unless the people mend to recess. Hope will give you the confidence, belief, and inspiration to move forward. It helps to eject the barrier of human life. Hate will advocate evil paths and stop people from being upright. Finally, the people could end up isolated. “A Vision of Pansophical Lens in Dave Pelzer’s *Help Yourself*” helps people to find their inner self, what am I, who am I, and why am I is amplified in Dave Pelzer’s Self-Help books.

This original, unpublished manuscript addresses the problem of human psychological barriers and the overall view of disturbed human life in our day-to-day lives. By using two key concepts, this manuscript has shown how to challenge the changes and how to live a glorious and peaceful life.

Financial Disclosure: There is no significant financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

Conflict of Interest: The researcher declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

Ethical Consideration: The researcher solemnly stated this article was not previously published or revised by other journals. This manuscript is wholly original, and the researcher is in full compliance with copyright regulations and ethical standards.

Institutional Review Board (IRB): The author found (IRB) is not necessary for this manuscript. Because the manuscript data and findings were a thematic framework. There is no human participation or field research. It is entirely drafted based on the primary and secondary sources which are mentioned in the references of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available in public domain including links/citations to publicly archived datasets analysed or generated during the study. One can obtain the relevant materials from the references below.

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