
**Unraveling Charlie's inner world: A psychological analysis of self-discovery,
Trauma and Resilience in *Never Never*.**

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Abstract:

Never Never, a novel by Colleen Hoover and Tarryn Fisher, deals with an emotional exploration of Charlie's self discovery. It brings an analyzation of the psychological approach of how she gets back from trauma while she suffers due to Dissociative amnesia. This study aims to explore Charlie's transformative journey from fragmented identity towards wholeness. The paper also analyzes the psychological process of how she discovers herself and heals through the application of psychodynamic, trauma and self-determination theories. Through a qualitative, literature-based examination of Charlie's character development, this research contributes to the understanding of how fictional narratives can clarify the process of self-discovery, trauma recovery, and personal growth through psychological theories.

Keywords: Psychological approach, Dissociative Amnesia, Trauma recovery, Psychodynamic approach, Self-determination, Resilience.

Introduction

Never Never, a novel written by Colleen Hoover and Tarryn Fisher in 2015. Colleen Hoover is a Sunday Times bestselling author known for emotional and unconventional love stories. Tarryn Fisher is a New York Times bestselling author of psychological thrillers and romance novels. This novel explores the mysterious journey of two teenagers, Charlie Wynwood and Silas Nash, who lose their memories and awaken in the middle of their lives with no recollection of who they are, which forces them to deal with a fragmented reality. They both travel together to rediscover their pasts and their relationships. Silas approaches with positivity, he regains all his memories, but Charlie struggles with mistrust and self-doubt, which causes deep emotional problems in her personality. Through a collection of clues and journal entries, Charlie discovers her troubled relationship with family and friends as well as her own behavior. This narrative gives her evolution from broken memories to a

whole sense, which represents a significant psychological transformation. This article explores the psychological layers of her self-discovery in her journey, which focuses on how she overcomes trauma in a fragmented state that reflects the complications in human identity.

Psychodynamic theory

Sigmund Freud developed the psychodynamic theory in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) explaining how human personality and behavior are shaped by unconscious forces, childhood experiences, and internal conflicts. Freud divided the human psyche into conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind. He states that the unconscious mind has feelings and emotions that are beyond awareness. These unconscious feelings and thoughts resurface through childhood experience and internal conflicts, which Freud termed as the "return of the repressed."

In this novel, *Never Never*, Charlie's self-discovery reflects the principle of Psychodynamic theory. While awakening with no recollection of memories, Charlie explores her room and she discovers her personal diaries, pictures, and hanging images, which helps her to know about the relationships with family members and Silas. Another incident while Charlie visits a restaurant with Silas and orders her favorite foods, despite having forgotten her old memories. Also during her visit to the father in prison, her memories of her father's love towards her, gradually resurface in her memories even though she initially unaware about her father.

These incidents reflects the principles of psychodynamic theory where the repressed memories of her childhood experience are begin to resurface into her unconscious mind. The repressed memories of the pictures and journals, her favorite things and dishes, her father's love towards her is resurface in her memories. The application of psychodynamic theory in analyzing Charlie's journey reveals how she recollects her memories through past experiences, which shapes her behavior and identity.

Trauma theory

In the book *Trauma and Recovery* (1982), Judith Herman introduces trauma theory, defining trauma as a disruption to a person's sense of self due to overwhelming fear and helplessness. He defines trauma theory, which has three stages: safety and stabilization, remembrance and mourning, reconnection and integration. These three stages are recovery model, where one must go through these phases while affected by trauma. In the first stage, a traumatized person needs to create a safe environment and establish physical and emotional safety. The second stage, they are processing their mind by remembering the incidents and mourning the trauma through narrative and expression. In the third stage, they can be able to find the reconnection in relationships and reintegrate into a meaningful life.

In this novel, *Never Never*, Charlie's self-discovery relates to Herman's trauma theory. At the beginning of the novel, Charlie loses all memories of her identity and past and she spends time with Silas to recollect the clues. Another incident, Charlie knows about her

family background, and her father's criminal behavior causes her emotional distress. She isolates herself from the family and seeks stability through Silas's support. Also Charlie thought she had been in a toxic relationship with Silas before her memory loss, which leads her to guilt and confusion about her identity.

By analyzing this trauma theory in Charlie's self-journey, she has gone through all three stages, which tend her broken memories to the whole sense of self. In all her situations, she needs Silas's support and she feels safe with him which reduces her isolation. When she gradually know about her past, she regret herself for some situations which she is unaware of. After mourning about her past, she reconnects with her memories as she regain her true relationship with Silas and also the family members. Charlie finds her identity by creating a safe environment, remembering and mourning about her past and finally she reconnecting the memories.

Self-determination theory

In the book *The psychology of self-determination theory* (1985), Edward L.Deci and Richard M.Ryan introduced Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which provides a outline for understanding human motivation, emphasizing three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When individuals fulfill these needs, they experience heightened motivation, psychological well-being, and personal growth. Autonomy involves making choices and controlling one's actions, while competence includes feeling capable and effective. Relatedness relates to forming meaningful connections with others.

Applying SDT to Charlie's character in *Never Never* by Colleen Hoover and Tarryn Fisher offers valuable perception into her psychological struggles and growth. A prime example is when Charlie awakens with no memory of her identity, severely weaken her autonomy. With no control over her life or decisions, she must reconstruct her past through clues rather than personal experiences. According to SDT, this lack of autonomy leads to distress and confusion, evident in Charlie's anxiety and frustration. As she regains memories and begins making independent choices, she reclaims her sense of self, boosting her motivation to solve the mystery of her amnesia.

Charlie's struggle with competence is another notable example. As she learns about her past mistakes, hurtful behavior, and unstable relationship with Silas, she feels increasingly incompetent in navigating her identity. SDT suggests that a sense of competence is vital for motivation and confidence. Initially, Charlie feels overwhelmed, but as she solves the mystery and uncovers the truth, she regains control. By making sense of her past and taking careful steps toward self-improvement, Charlie fulfills her need for competence, increasing her determination to change.

Charlie's self-discovery relates to relatedness, particularly in Charlie's relationship with Silas. Throughout the novel, Silas provides support, even when Charlie doesn't remember him. SDT states that meaningful relationships enhance motivation and well-being. As Charlie struggles to trust Silas, their growing emotional bond helps her feel more connected and grounded. This fulfillment of relatedness strengthens her resilience and determination to uncover the truth.

By applying SDT to Charlie's journey, it becomes clear that her struggles with autonomy, competence, and relatedness impact her psychological state. As she gradually fulfills these needs, she experiences personal growth and motivation, ultimately leading her toward self-discovery.

Psychological perspective in Charlie's character

From a psychological perspective, Charlie's character in *Never, Never* provides an effective case study of how trauma and amnesia can break an individual's sense of self. Her struggle with memory loss leaves her in a state of deep confusion, unable to connect her present experiences with her past identity. This disintegration coincides with the concept of identity diffusion, a condition in which trauma disrupts the development of a self-concept, leaving an individual feeling fragmented and disconnected from their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Charlie's inability to recall her past not only affects her self-perception but also creates difficulties in attachment. Psychological theories suggest that trauma can destroy one's ability to form and maintain healthy relationships, making it harder for individuals to trust others or establish a stable sense of belonging.

Charlie's complicated perception of reality is shaped by cognitive defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection, which serve to protect her from facing painful truths about her past. These mechanisms, while providing temporary relief, ultimately prevent her from processing and healing from her trauma. Her mind unconsciously constructs barriers, making it difficult for her to integrate past experiences into her current identity. This psychological confusion is reflective of dissociative disorders, where individuals separate from distressing memories as a means of self-preservation. Furthermore, her dissociation highlights how the brain reacts to extreme emotional distress, showcasing the mind's ability to compartmentalize pain to ensure survival.

Despite the deep psychological challenges she faces, Charlie's journey also enhances the strength of the human psyche. Her efforts to uncover the truth and piece together her fractured identity indicate the natural drive for self-restoration and healing. Through small moments of self-awareness and resilience, she gradually begins to reconstruct her sense of self, demonstrating the power of perseverance and inner strength. Her character focuses on the effects of trauma on mental health, showing that while the past can break one's sense of self, recovery is possible through self-discovery, emotional strength, and the willingness to overcome suppressed pain. Charlie's experiences provide insight into the human mind's

complexities, shedding light on how trauma shapes identity, relationships, and perception. This is analyzed by some theories that uncover the mystery of how she overcomes trauma, ultimately proving that the mind, despite its vulnerabilities, possesses an incredible ability to heal and adapt.

Charlie's journey also reflects the importance of external support in the process of healing from trauma and identity fragmentation. Throughout *Never, Never*, her interactions with others play a crucial role in shaping her self-perception and guiding her toward self-discovery. Psychological research suggests that social connections and meaningful relationships are vital in overcoming traumatic experiences, as they provide emotional validation and stability. Despite her struggles with trust and attachment, Charlie gradually learns to rely on others, demonstrating the significance of interpersonal relationships in rebuilding a shattered identity. Additionally, her evolving self-awareness highlights the role of introspection in overcoming psychological distress. By confronting suppressed memories and unraveling the truth, she moves toward a more coherent sense of self. This underscores the idea that recovery is not solely an internal process but is also influenced by external factors such as support systems, personal resilience, and the willingness to engage with one's past to move forward.

Conclusion

In *Never Never*, Charlie's journey of self-discovery is deeply explored through psychodynamic, trauma, and self-determination theories, revealing the difficulties of her fragmented identity. Her lost memories symbolize the Freudian concept of repression, where traumatic events are pushed into the unconscious, causing internal conflicts that manifest in her struggle to reclaim her sense of self. This aligns with psychodynamic theory, which emphasizes how unresolved past experiences shape present behavior and emotions. Additionally, trauma theory helps explain the emotional distress and isolation she experiences. The novel explains how trauma disrupts identity formation, leading to dissociation and emotional detachment. Charlie's disorientation and confusion reflect the psychological impact of trauma, showing how it alters one's perception of reality. The emotional struggles she faces highlight the long-lasting effects of trauma on an individual's ability to trust, connect, and rebuild relationships.

Furthermore, self-determination theory (SDT) provides Charlie's motivation and personal growth throughout the novel. SDT emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key psychological needs essential for self-actualization. As Charlie navigates her journey, she gradually regains a sense of control over her identity, demonstrating resilience and personal agency. Her increasing ability to solve the mystery of her past reflects a growing sense of competence, while the relationships she rebuilds with others fulfill the need for relatedness, showing how social support is essential for healing and self-discovery. As she uncovers her past, Charlie's journey demonstrates resilience and the human capacity for healing. Her transformation from a fragmented self to someone with a cohesive identity

underscores the power of self-awareness and emotional growth. The novel ultimately portrays the strength of the human spirit in navigating emotional turmoil and reclaiming one's true self, showing how psychological theories intersect in the process of personal transformation.

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