

## The gifts of being an empath

**Guest: Dr Judith Orloff**

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### **[00:00:10] Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone to this interview where I'm really excited to be talking to Dr Judith Orloff. Firstly, Dr Orloff welcome and thank you for joining me for this interview.

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

My pleasure.

### **Alex Howard**

So we recorded an interview for the first Trauma Super Conference where we were talking about some of the key principles of what it is to be an empath and navigating the challenges. And I was thinking with this interview, it's always nice to go in slightly different directions each time that we have a dialogue. And I'm really excited to get into some of the gifts, some of the actual wonderful potentials that can come from being an empath.

Just to give people Dr Orloff's background, I'm sure many of you will be familiar with her work, but Judith Olaf, MD, is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Empath Survival Guide: Life Strategies for Sensitive People*. Her more recent book, *Thriving as an Empath*, offers daily self-care tools for sensitive people, along with its companion, the *Empaths Empowerment Journal*.

Dr Orloff is a psychiatrist, an empath, and is on the UCLA Psychiatric Clinical Faculty. She synthesizes the pearls of traditional medicine with cutting edge knowledge of intuition, energy, and spirituality. Dr Orloff also specializes in treating empaths and highly sensitive people in her private practice.

So, Dr Orloff, I think many people watching this just hear the word empath and they'll probably already feel some resonance with that. But for those that perhaps haven't heard the term before, or just so we're really clear what we're talking about, what do you mean when you talk of someone being an empath?

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

Well, an empath is somebody who has very high sensitivities, and I'm an empath, that's why I have so much interest in it in terms of understanding myself and learning protection strategies so I don't take on the stress and angst of the world, and there's plenty of that now. But an empath is somebody who's super sensitive, who feels things through energy and can feel the energy coming from people

rather than words. And they tend to be creative, spiritual, connected, love deeply, and very passionate about nature. But they don't have the normal filters that other people have.

**[00:02:41]**

So the stress and the toxic energy and the fear and everything that's coming at you, empaths just absorb it, they're just open. And that can create a lot of problems in terms of depression, anxiety, feeling off, feeling overwhelmed, going on a sensory overload. So the whole challenge of being an empath is to maximize your gifts, as we'll discuss, and to learn how to develop self-care techniques so you can minimize the challenges.

And I feel so strongly about this because, as everyone well knows, our world is in such a need of healing now. And empaths are so in touch with their hearts and their healing. They just have to take good care of themselves and learn how to center and not take on the angst. So you could begin to channel that healing energy towards yourself first and foremost, the self empathy, having empathy with yourself, which is so hard, so hard, but it's so essential.

And then how to bring your empath gifts into the world. So you first start with yourself, of course, because you've got to be grounded together, and then channel outward towards your family, towards your community, towards the world. And so I think empaths play a very important role in saving our world. And I just really feel that they are the path forgers but they need to get themselves together so they can follow the call.

**Alex Howard**

And it's funny, so much has happened in the world just since you and I recorded together last year, I think it would have been probably May time 2020 when we filmed together for the first Trauma Super Conference. We're filming this now in summer 2021. And it's funny because when we were filming before, I think to a lot of us it felt like we're in this pandemic, but hopefully it'll be over soon. I don't think many of us realized that a year later there would still be so much that's complicated and difficult.

And I think empaths probably might have initially thought, well, actually, if I'm at home, I'm not around people so much, that's going to be less intense. But I think for many because there's so much cultural divide and there's so much complexity, let's say, in the world, that even though they're not perhaps all so much in physical contact, I think people are really feeling those burdens and those loads.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

That's so true. And a certain level of trauma is happening to empaths, because especially those that are wide open and haven't awakened yet and learn the self-care skills, where they're just wide open, a wide open flower to everything that's happening in the world. A parade of narcissists, struggle, war, natural disaster. I mean, we're having everything. And the empaths who don't have the skills yet are really being demolished.

And they've called me and come to me as patients, exhausted, on sensory overload, wanting to give up, how do I handle all this? Why was I born during this time? The whole self exploration which you need guidance with. You can't do it on your own. It's very hard to do it on your own. You need somebody who gets it, who has been on the path before you to help you a little bit, and hopefully I can provide that in this interview.

**[00:06:11]**

But empaths have experienced the trauma and don't know how to process it. That's one level. But on another level, many empaths have been happy being at home and decreasing traffic and decreasing external stimulation and not feeling the demands, and the boundaries, in a sense, are already set in the world, where whatever people do with masks or whatever the rules are, the empaths don't have to set the rules.

I've always been for keeping people 6ft away from me. I don't like it when people get close to me. And that's true with many empaths in the public, because there's all kinds of random energies out there, and I'd rather just stay in my own energy and just keep a distance from people. I like that. And I think, at least in the outside world, not among my loved ones and beloved, not usually, but it depends.

So that part has been, some empaths have found it easier. And my lifestyle as an empath is rather, not antisocial but I stay home a lot and I write and I think and I meditate and I walk by the ocean and I'm with one or two friends or my partner. So I don't have a big life by choice. As an empath I want to have the kind of life I have.

### **Alex Howard**

It's almost easier. I'm an introvert in the sense that I really like being home. My wife and I have very different memories of the first 5 months of the very strict lockdown in the UK, because I'm like, it was heaven, my wife, my kids, everyone was home. My wife was like, we couldn't go out or do anything.

But of course, different people have their own different experiences. But I'd love to, before we get into a bit more about some of the gifts of being an empath, just a little bit of your journey. Because as a successful psychiatrist, having gone on this journey of really understanding and amplifying understanding around this piece, how did that happen for you?

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

That's a good question. I think each of our life paths prepare us for what we're meant to do. And when I was born, I think from the time I was born I was an empath. I was very sensitive, I always felt things so strongly, I could feel people's energy, I would have strong intuitions about people. I once picked up that my parent's friend was going to commit suicide and I mentioned that I had a dream about it and they said, why do you keep saying these horrible things about my friend? And it turns out he did. And then they said, never mention another one of your intuitions or dreams. I had a lot of night dreams that would give me information at home again.

So I grew up believing there was something wrong with me. And I never understood why I couldn't go into shopping malls and crowded places and not get overwhelmed or depressed or actually get physical pain from going in these places. I go in feeling fine, and walk out not so good. And I didn't realize, I had no one to tell me, no one to guide me. So I was pretty much alone as a child. I was an only child with two physician parents and 25 physicians in my family.

### **Alex Howard**

That's something.

**[00:09:46] Dr Judith Orloff**

I was this little girl who was an only child. I looked up at the moon, the moon, my dog, the ocean, and my best friend. I always had a best friend thank goodness, and I climbed trees and just looked around at the stars. And I'd often imagine if a spaceship would come and land and take me to my true home where I could belong and find my true family. That's what I was thinking as a child.

So all that, crime me for understanding what was going on in me. I've got to say, and I wrote about this in *Second Sight*, I ran from my empath abilities for a long time, I got heavily involved with drugs in the early 70s, and I just wanted to squash them. But because it was just too much for me, I wanted to fit in and I never fit in and I still don't really fit in, but now I like it about myself.

**Alex Howard**

Now you're happy about not fitting in.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

I like it. I don't want to fit in. I want to be on the path of the heart, and I want to go in that direction in terms of spiritual growth and stay in the core of my empath being. Being true to myself, that's my path. It's not fitting in the mainstream.

But because I had so much struggle, especially with a conservative mother who wanted me to go to country clubs and fit in the mainstream, and dress a certain way, and have my hair a certain way. Don't be yourself. Be this other person. And I was so rebellious, I rebelled into, no, I have to be me.

So that, in answer to your question, stimulated me to find out what was really going on in me. When I was in the early days I met a psychiatrist and he was able to see, with a capital S, my empath self. We didn't have a word for it at that time, he said to me, in order for you to be whole, you've got to embrace this. You can't keep running from it. It will be a disaster if you keep running from it. And because I really liked him and I responded to him, that's one thing, if I responded to somebody I'll most likely listen to them.

So he was my guy. And I've had a couple of guys like that in my own development, and I'm that for other people now, so I'm really happy that I can do that. Anyway, that's what set me on the path, is just trying to understand what I'm going through here that nobody seemed to understand.

**Alex Howard**

And it's interesting what you say about the psychiatrist who really helped you to see and to embody and to own that part of you, and you were saying how important that is. Because somehow, almost particularly when they can be qualities that society can be very easy to judge as being a weakness or being something that's wrong with someone, that it's almost all the more important to have that person say, this is something to embrace, this is something to be proud of. That ultimately, that there are...

**Dr Judith Orloff**

It just releases you like, oh, really? This isn't something horrible I have to hide. And so to have somebody encourage you like that, and to tell you the truth about your being, I mean, this is the truth about who you are. You're incredible. You have empathy. Empathy, the Dalai Lama said, is the most

precious qualities in human nature. Empathy, being able to have their heart reach out to other people to help them, to heal the world, to communicate with animals, to love the plants, to love the planet, to love your family, to love your soul, friends. That your heart wants to go out. Not everybody's heart does that. People hold things quite close to the vest and they stay disembodied heads where they're up in their head, thinking, thinking, thinking all the time.

### **[00:13:54]**

So it doesn't really come down to the body. And just, all the empaths who are listening, it's traumatic not to be seen. It feels horrible. And especially if you were brought up in a chaotic household where it was too noisy and chaotic, or narcissistic parents who were more interested in themselves than you and helping you develop your own soul. Or alcoholism or abuse or neglect or parents trying to make you into something that you're not, all of that is traumatic to this beautiful being trying to grow and find its way.

So just know that part of the recovery from all that kind of childhood that so many of us have had with well meaning parents. I mean, these aren't all abusive parents. My parents were well meaning. I was the only child. They loved me more than anything, which was too much for me, I was often overwhelmed and feeling suffocated, but they meant well. My parents meant well. And maybe your parents meant well. But especially parents in that era, they were so misguided, they would say things like, oh, you're too sensitive. Why don't you get a thicker skin? Things like that, which just deflate you. Why should I give to it anyway?

### **Alex Howard**

I think it's an important point though, because I think it's sometimes hard for us to have these two things coexist, that our parents loved us and our parents made mistakes. Because I think what we often think is if someone didn't give us what we needed, it must mean that there's some ulterior motive or they didn't love us. And I think what you're saying is so important, it can be as simple as a lack of capacity or a lack of strategy or skill that could be hugely traumatic, but it doesn't mean that we weren't loved.

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

That's right. With empathy you get to feel into other people and intuition. You get to see their true motives. And sometimes when you tune in, when you're able to get beyond the charge, or the trauma, or how could they do this to me? And you're able to find that neutral place within you and tune in to this person, and you really get that they did the best they can and they loved you with all their hearts. And that was limited, but it was from their hearts. It will help you heal because you need to see the truth about this. Not everyone, all the parents are enemies or ogres, some are, but not all of them.

So you have to imagine and look at your parents. I mean, maybe they were, so many were, but a lot weren't. And when you have the realization, they really did the best they can, not just in your head, but your heart goes, oh, that's strange. They did the best they could but it's real. And that somehow is liberating. It helped liberate me.

And I listen to my dreams a lot. Both my parents have passed on and I love them very much, and they have limitations in terms of how they appreciated me. But I had a dream where I went to the house where I grew up and I knocked on the door and I said I was looking for my parents. And there were

other people there and they said, your parents don't live here anymore. You shouldn't come back here. There's nothing here for you. Just go out and live a happy life.

### **[00:17:37] Alex Howard**

As you're speaking, one of the things that is also coming to my mind, particularly as we're really shaping this understanding of what it means to be an empath, is that empaths, by nature, are feeling a lot of everyone else's stuff and often feeling a lot of empathy and compassion and kindness, but don't always have, as you mentioned briefly earlier, that same empathy for themselves. The sweetness and the softness can tend to go out when the place we most need it is for it to go in.

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

You have to start with yourself. And as a psychiatrist, I've had therapist friends all this time in my career, and we always joke that it's so much harder to be loving and empathic with yourself than with the patients or with other people. Everybody knows that. It's harder. I could have empathy for my patients and when it comes to myself, if I'm really hurting, like recently, a loved one was going through a health challenge and it was really hurting, it was hurting me to feel what this person was going through.

And I was like, have empathy for yourself. And all I could feel was pain. Have empathy for yourself. And I felt pain in my body. And it is saturated. It did come. It didn't come till the next day, but it did come. So to just put in the prayer, please let me have empathy. Please release this pain so I can be of service to my loved one, so that the empath doesn't have to suffer the pain of other people.

And for me as an empath, it's the hardest with those I love when they go through health challenges. That is my big button. Because my mother was always going through health challenges and it was very overwhelming to me as an empathic child. I would take on her anxiety. And this is true with trauma, and many empaths end up having trauma from childhood. If you have parents who had some kind of mental illness or some kind of physical problems. Like my mother asked me to sit by her bed, hold her hand when she had chest pain from heart disease. And she had closed the curtains. And I was scared. I didn't want to be there. And when I held her hand I felt her pain and it was unbearable for me. And I just wanted to run. But it was my mother so I didn't run.

And so part of my work as an adult is to cut the bonds with my mother's anxiety and physical problems because it used to scare me to death. And so whatever we go through, I know a lot of empaths pick up their mother's anxiety. The mother is a very important force to look at for empaths to see what relationship you had with your mother so you don't repeat the trauma patterns in your own life. And it's so easy to do. You say, I'll never be like my mother. And there you are, the critical voice, I'm my mother, oh great. But it's wrong. Fear comes up, anxiety comes up throughout life, it just comes up. Oh, old friend, let me deal with you again, let me be compassionate and empathic with myself as I deal with it again, a different layer, the layers of the onion.

So I hope you all can have that empathy for yourself when you do the brave work of trauma healing, because it's not like you just have one issue and you deal with it and it's done. I wish it was that way. Sometimes you have the, 'ah-ha' and it's lifted. Like people get sober who never drink or use again. They have it lifted. That's true. I've seen that. But usually with trauma work it's layers, what you can handle, going slowly, being empathic with yourself, noticing when it hurts just so much. Like with me the other night with the pain I felt despite my plea for empathy for myself.

**[00:21:46]**

So that's the real life work that you do. As an empath that's what I do. And it feels great. This is part of the strength of an empath to know that you can do this. You can work with your pain. You can work with anything. Empathy can get you through any difficult experience in your life. Empathy and self love. The love can get you through anything if you can find it.

**Alex Howard**

I think sometimes what happens is that, I think we can all be guilty of this idea that the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence. That as an empath that we're feeling so much that it can feel so overwhelming to think, I just don't want to feel so much. But of course, the other side of that fence is being a sociopath or a narcissist in the sense of not feeling. And actually the suffering of not feeling both for that individual and those around them is far greater.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

It's a tricky subject. In the *Empath Survival Guide* I have a chapter on narcissists and sociopaths and psychopaths and how to deal with them and how they have empathy deficiency disorder, meaning they're not neurologically wired to feel empathy. But in terms of their suffering, do they suffer because of that? I don't think so. Not really. We suffer because of it. They don't suffer from it. If they suffer from it they might want to change. But to the narcissist it's always your fault. It's never, let me be accountable for my role in this. If you've had a narcissistic mother, I doubt she's going to say, oh, I'm so sorry for how I treated you, and that I wasn't there for you more. They don't feel that way usually.

**Alex Howard**

But is it true that what they do miss is the sweetness of human intimacy and contact? Like there's just a deficiency or an absent? Maybe they don't feel the longing, they don't have the need for it, perhaps.

But I think about the greatest joy of my life, the sweetness of my contact with my children and my wife, and that's the oxygen of life.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

For you.

**Alex Howard**

Projecting my reality onto everyone else.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

Because narcissist, it's so hard, that's why I focus on this topic in the book, because it's so hard for loving, empathic empaths to get that somebody's wired differently, and they don't respond in those ways. But narcissists are mainly interested in, and I name malignant full blown narcissists, is power. That's what gets them off. It's having power over you. They love power. They're intoxicated by power. That's the only thing. They're not intoxicated by love. They can express love if you do exactly what they want you to do, but it's a very conditional love, and you're going to get very lonely if you're married to somebody like this for many years.

[00:24:39]

So I always tell my empath patients to go find friends if you want to stay married to this person. And there are good reasons why people do. To go find some friends who can love you up and who you can talk to other than the narcissist, or you will always be disappointed.

### **Alex Howard**

One of the most important things if we have the sense of being so sensitive to the world around us, you mentioned earlier, is just the physical distance, but sometimes it's also that we can have a lot of physical distance, but we can still be very much energetically overloaded by someone. And that it's almost like the more empathic we are, the harder we find it to say no and to set those boundaries. But that can be really important.

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

That's part of the empath awakening, it's coming to the acceptance that you will have to set boundaries. As hard as it is, you must learn to do it. If you don't learn to do it, and that's always a choice, you're going to suffer. You want to feel good as an empath and you want to feel empowered out in the world or you want to feel empowered when somebody challenges you or criticizes you or starts getting angry or is abusive or whatever they do, or they just want to go out with you and you're not in the mood to go out. So you have to be able to say no.

A positive no. No is a complete sentence. I can't go out with you tonight. I'm just too tired. I know you're disappointed, and that's so hard for empaths to deal with, other people's disappointments. They don't want to disappoint anyone. They tend to be people pleasers. They want everyone to be happy. They're the peacemakers. And it's just not really a healthy role.

Now, at times you can do that but you also have to take care of yourself and have some alone time, have some dreaming time where you could just dream your life the way you want it, to meditate and get in touch with your empathic self, your higher self. What I call, I'm writing about this now, your larger self versus your smaller self. Your smaller self is the mind. It's all kinds of unresolved emotions swirling around. It's a monkey mind shattering all the time, and it's the one that wants to hold on to resentment because it's totally self righteous throughout. This person hurt me and I'm never giving this resentment up. That's the small self, but the large self, which is the heart space or the intuitive space, if you can shift, which is part of the empath training, from the small self to the large self and be able to see things from a bigger picture point of view, you can become neutral and tune in to the motivations of people and find out what suffering caused them to perpetrate an act.

And this doesn't forgive the act. This is a complicated subject. It does not forgive the act, but the magical thing that happens, and you have to just experience it, is once you feel their suffering and you could feel why they did this, you're liberated more and you don't have the same propensity to hold on to it and repeat it with everybody you talk to or your grandkids. Oh, this person wronged me or this person did this or this person did that. They did do that. You are right. Without doubt you are right, but that's not going to free you being right.

And this is so hard for the small self and the ego, so hard. It's not easy training. I'm warning you, it's not. It can transform you, but it goes against what the ego and the mind says. So that's why you need a little bit of guidance here. And I'm just kind of throwing it in this interview, but it's a big topic that I talk about in this new book that I'm writing about, and in *The Empath Guide*, about healing. What does healing really mean? And what does it ask of us? It sometimes asks what seems impossible to the



linear mind or our ego. It just seems impossible. And I warn you, it will say, no, I don't want to do it. But if you can just open up a teensy bit as an empath and open up to a larger place, a heartfelt space, intuitive space to be able to see, with the capital S, other people, the ones that hurt you. And start with the easy ones. Don't start with the abusive mother. Start with the one who stole your parking space.

**[00:29:28] Alex Howard**

As you're talking, what strikes me is the importance of not losing contact with one's own body, losing contact with one's own heart. I think what you're saying is, it's not losing yourself in their experience and disowning your own experience. It's owning your experience and having empathy for their experience. Is that right?

**Dr Judith Orloff**

Yes. But be prepared, the ego is going to go, why would I want to do that? That's just what it says. But we're talking about empathic evolution and awakening here. Sometimes it takes the conscious shift to say, I don't want to do this. I say this to myself all the time. I don't like this person. I don't want to do it. Why should I? You have to deal with that level of your response first, you can't just jump to forgiveness or jump to empathy. I don't like this person, I don't want to give up my resentment. All right, fine. That's good. All right. Let's do an experiment and rise higher and tune in and see if we can get some information here about their suffering.

And because you're an empath your heart will immediately open once you can actually find it through suffering. And it will open. And the point is to free you from obsessing about it, to free you from the pain in your body, which is stuck in your muscles, which is stuck in your fascia and your organs, because your ego doesn't want to let go of it.

So it's a really interesting and challenging process that I really invite you to take on, and it will bring amazing results. And I think if people could do this in the world, we would be in a different place. We wouldn't be so triggered by everything that has happened to us. And I want to emphasize you're right, they were horrible, they did atrocious things. No argument there. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about how to free yourself from keeping that in your energy field so it dominates your psychic space.

**Alex Howard**

One of my teachers once said to me that, hatred is like swallowing poison and hoping the other person dies. And there was something about that that really struck me. It's quite a graphic image, but at the time it really struck me. It was like it's actually me that has the toxicity of this hate inside of me and they're not suffering as a result of it. But I am.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

It's so unfair, isn't it?

**Alex Howard**

It sucks, right?

**[00:32:05] Dr Judith Orloff**

So you can get stuck in, oh, it's so unfair. Why do I have to go through all that? All that smaller mind thought. And you're justified. I can't tell my patients enough. You're justified in your feelings. You don't have to do this. Just stay where you are if you're happy. But if you're sick of it and you're an empath and you don't want to be carrying around the past in your energy field, this is a way to free yourself, and you just have to try it in order to feel the release.

I could talk about it to the end of the world, but you've got to try it and sometimes acting as if is perfect, let's say you don't believe it, but you try it anyways, then, I mean, that has led me into the willingness of whatever action I'm resisting that's good for me. It's about self empathy, empathy with yourself.

I have a section in *Thriving as an Empath*, my self-care book, where I apologized to everyone who's ever been hurt by their abusers, by their parents. I apologize. I am so sorry you were hurt. I'm so sorry you had to go through pain on the behalf of all your abusers, all of the people who hurt you or didn't see you. I apologize for them, and I'm going to take care of you. Your higher self will take care of you so that this hurt will never happen again. And so somebody's got to apologize.

**Alex Howard**

Someone's got to start the process.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

Somebody's got to. And I'm more than happy to apologize for everyone who has ever hurt you because you deserve that apology, even if they can't be big enough people to give it to you.

**Alex Howard**

And also, I think what's so important in what you're saying, particularly in the frame of this conversation, is that it's very easy to see being an empath as being the problem. But what I'm hearing you say, is one's capacity for empathy also can be the very foundation of their capacity to heal.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

Oh, yes. As long as you practice self-care techniques, learn how to set boundaries, learn how to center yourself. So it's an awakening course. You have all these sensitivities. You could either suffer for the rest of your life with them or begin to take the steps that will free you so that you can... The simple things. I love communicating with flowers. I love being in nature. And being an empath you can feel that flower, the passion you have, the creativity, the intuition, what you're capable of in terms of your heart and the happiness.

Empathy involves being happy for other people, too. It's like a contact high with their happiness or their compassion. If you're around a big heart person and you feel all that heart energy coming to them, you open up all your empath frequencies and you absorb that. That's a beautiful thing. That's a positive share. Not everyone gives off negative energy, we're just focusing on it. But as an empath, you pick up all that positive. You choose those people as part of your circle. Those are the ones you want to be around, not the ones that you're constantly fighting and ward up their toxic energy. But you have family members, you have people born into a generational thing where you can't get rid of them. So you must learn how to deal with them in a more empowered way, rather than just feeling diminished every time you go to Thanksgiving dinner and your aunt starts criticizing you.

**[00:35:57] Alex Howard**

We all have that family member. It's not always an aunt. We all have that person.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

We all have that person but you don't want to sit next to them, you want to somehow plan to sit next to a nice one.

I had someone at these dinners, they would constantly say to me, are you married yet? Every year. Are you married yet? I was like, no, I'm not, I'm single. Leave me alone. I wanted to avoid her at that time, I didn't like that. It made me cringe because I was still hurting because of that particular point at that time.

**Alex Howard**

So I'm mindful that there are people watching this, I'm sure many people deeply resonate with it and recognize that, as you said, this is a big journey. It's not a, figure this piece out and suddenly I can now celebrate that I'm an empath because it's all easy. It's a life journey that one learns to go on.

But you mentioned one of the starting points is self-care, that that really becomes the foundation. And it's so important for empaths because of their sensitivity. What are a few practical ways that one can start that self-care journey?

**Dr Judith Orloff**

Number one, practice a sacred pause. When you feel triggered, when you're out in the world or when you're with a relative, do not speak right away. Do not send an email, a text, or phone. Train yourself to take a sacred pause before you respond. That will help alleviate a lot of negative feedback that you will get. So if you learn to pause, that's the first step to being empathic.

And then really learning how to set boundaries so that you can say no to certain things. And tuning into your body and being able to say, does this feel good in my body? This person, this decision, this whatever it is I'm encountering, it's my body liking this? And if the body likes it, when my body likes something, I feel excited. I feel energized. My heart opens. I start getting ideas. I start opening, igniting. But if my body doesn't like it I get physically ill or I get a stomachache or my neck gets tight or my back starts hurting, or whatever symptoms I have in my body get aggravated. These are my signs that something isn't right. Or my energy plummets. I suddenly feel exhausted hearing this. And the person could be smiling. The person could seem perfectly fine, but as an empath you feel what's going on. The energy between you is more important than how they present themselves.

**Alex Howard**

That's powerful information. I mean to have that compass be so clear, it might feel too strong and too clear, but at least one has that clarity.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

You have to. But then again, you have to deal with your ego. If you want something to happen really bad, let's say you're applying for a job, and you want this job and you go in for the interview and it feels awful there. If you feel exhausted, the people are making you upset and agitated, but there's a

lot of money for you. So it's a choice. These are real life situations. These are choices. Maybe the money might be more important than that. You can learn how to center yourself in a difficult situation, but it might not be.

### **[00:39:41]**

A lot of people in the workplace now are saying, I don't want to work here, I don't want these conditions. I want other conditions. That's one thing the pandemic has really helped people with is to reevaluate their work life. And empaths will think, maybe I want a different kind of job, totally different. Or modify it or work from home, which empaths tend to really like versus going into an office environment with all the politics.

Now you have to ask your body all the time an empath, how does this feel? And sometimes it will conflict with what your ego or your mind wants. So you've got to be ready for that. And at that point you have to ask yourself, all right, here's the dilemma. My mind wants that, my body is not happy. What am I going to do? And at the very least, be cautious, go slow, don't commit until you can come to terms with what's the right decision for you.

Because what I've seen with many of my patients and workshop participants is that if they go against their bodies it's not usually a good outcome. Because what I think is the body will turn up the symptoms. I know my body has been a blessing and a curse. I somatize, and my body will instantly tell me if I don't like something because I'll feel it in my body. And if I don't listen to my body it's going to get worse. Whatever it is, it will amp up. And I know that. And I must bow to my body and say, well, okay.

And now I like to do that mostly, but you have to. If you don't you will pay a price. I have a Dallas spiritual teacher and he says, there are no paths that are wrong paths, some are just more painful than others. So it's up to you. All this is a choice that we're talking about today. To practice self-care is a choice. And maybe some of you have been brought up thinking it's selfish to practice self-care or that you're codependent and you put other people in front of you and you're constantly obsessing about the needs of others and neglecting your own needs.

That's part of the challenge of being an empath and how to put your needs higher up in terms of your life and to be able to say to yourself each day, what does my body need? What do I need today? Because it changes every day as an empath. You never know, you can make the best day plans and you're tired that day. You didn't plan on being tired. You've got to change. You've got to recoup your energy however you can and go, okay, I see this. So maybe I won't go out tonight with a friend. Maybe I'll take a bath. Maybe I'll close the door and put my sign up on my door, which is great for empaths, saying 'meditating' or 'do not disturb'. I have a 'do not disturb' sign. So does my partner because he doesn't want me interrupting him, he doesn't like interruptions. Which is so great. I love that because I hate interruptions. And if I'm meditating the last thing I want is somebody hovering next to my door.

### **Alex Howard**

They might as well bang on it loudly when you can feel that someone's outside.

### **Dr Judith Orloff**

All empaths can feel the hovering.

**[00:43:07] Alex Howard**

Judith, there are so many places we could go, but I am mindful of time, but people that want to find out more about you and your work, obviously, a great starting point is the *Empath Survival Guide*, but mention some of the other things that people can find out, that you're up to.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

Yes, I have the self-care book, *Thriving as an Empath: 365 Days of Self-Care*, and it's very useful if you want just a page of self-care to practice every day. It's very practical, actionable and short, but you can practice it and it will keep you in your heart as an empath.

And also I have an online course, *The Empath Survival Guide* online course, which you can also find out about all of this on my website, [drjudithorloff.com](http://drjudithorloff.com)

There's also free blogs and videos and information about empaths. An empath support page, so please utilize my website. It's going to be very useful for you.

**Alex Howard**

Thank you so much. I really enjoyed this interview. Thank you.

**Dr Judith Orloff**

You're very welcome.