



Conscious Life presents

TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

Trauma healing for empaths

Guest: Dr Judith Orloff

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[00:00:09] Alex Howard

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Dr Judith Orloff.

And we're going to be talking about empaths and highly sensitive people and the relationship with trauma. And I think a lot of people will identify with some of the qualities and aspects that we're going to be exploring. We'll also come to some of the practical ways that you can help bring more balance and more equanimity.

So just to introduce Judith, Dr Judith Orloff is the New York Times best-selling author of *The Empath's Survival Guide*. Dr Orloff is a psychiatrist and empath and on the UCLA Psychiatric Clinical faculty. She synthesizes the pearls of traditional medicine with cutting edge knowledge of intuition, energy, and spirituality and specializes in treating highly sensitive people in her private practice. Her latest books are *Affirmations For Empaths* and *Thriving As An Empath*. Dr Orloff's work has been featured on the Today Show, CNN, Oprah Magazine and in The New York Times.

Alex Howard

So firstly, Judith, welcome back. I always enjoy our conversations. Thank you for making some time.

Dr Judith Orloff

You're very welcome.

Alex Howard

So why don't we just start a little bit with some of your journey to working in this field. What got you so interested in doing the incredible work that you've done of raising both awareness but also giving strategies for people that identify as being empaths or highly sensitive people?

Dr Judith Orloff

Great question. I'm a psychiatrist and I supervise residents at UCLA in the psychiatric training program, and I'm also an empath. And so I combine my traditional medical knowledge, which was four years of medical school and about six years of psychiatric residency, plus the pre-med. I

combine all that and I value it and I use it along with empathic skills. And empathic and intuitive skills are different from the linear training that I had that was more biologically based.

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And we were taught to give medications and have biological interventions for people experiencing all kinds of issues labeled as disorders in the DSM-5. And of course, I don't use the word disorder. It's not something I really believe in. You know, in terms of categorizing people with disorders, I look more at people going through life experiences and spiritual challenges that need to be addressed in this life, and that's part of it. So I'm a psychiatrist. I'm an empath. And the way I got into this was I was an empathic child, and I was an only child of two physician parents, 25 physicians in my family.

Alex Howard

That's got to be some kind of world record, right? I mean, that's something.

Dr Judith Orloff

It is amazing. I mean, really good healers, devoted people in their various fields of radiology, family practice, all kinds of things, but lots of physicians. But I didn't want to be a physician. I was more creative in writing, and I was on the edge of various things. I was never in the center, and so I didn't want to be a physician like my parents because I was bored basically by their friends, which at the time, friends were really important.

So I didn't think I'd become a physician. But then I started getting into my dreams and my intuitions and I had a wonderful mentor named Thelma Moss, Dr Thelma Moss at UCLA. And I had a dream where a voice came to me and told me you are going to become a psychiatrist to have the credentials to legitimize these abilities, these intuitive empathic abilities in medicine. And it was a simple, clear, crisp voice, no argument in the dream. But I woke up and I thought, what?

But because I was beginning to trust my intuitions, I enrolled in a course in Santa Monica City College. And just one course became two, which became all my years of medical training, because I followed my intuition of the dream even though my mind didn't believe it, there's no way I'm going to do this. But I had the dream, I wanted to start trusting myself, so there you go. I enrolled in a course when I had dropped out of school and just was living with my boyfriend in Venice Beach and working in the towel department and The May Company and then studying a little parapsychology. And then I enrolled and here's the result.

Alex Howard

I've never heard that phrase before, studying a little parapsychology, just like a little hobby on the side.

Dr Judith Orloff

It was because I always had that in my nature. I had predictive dreams, I was able to sense... Now we'll talk about empaths and trauma but I was always an empath. An empath is somebody who is super sensitive, super intuitive, comes from their heart, loves to help people, loves nature,

connects with animals a lot of times, but they don't have the same barriers around that protection that other people have.

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And so we tend to get overwhelmed by other people's energy just on a regular day. But if you have trauma added into that mix and you have narcissistic, alcoholic parents, you have neglect, you have the various kinds of trauma that can happen, that rips open an empath's defenses and makes them feel so raw and overwhelmed and hurt that their sensitivity allows them to be traumatized and retraumatized again unless somebody comes in and offers a support.

And so unfortunately, a lot of empathic children don't have any support and they're stuck with these parents who are doing the best they can, I guess, but the child gets traumatized and part of the healing from trauma as an empath is dealing with the childhood and developing ways to protect yourself and ways to set boundaries and a whole healthy network of skills that we can talk about for your life so that never happens again to you.

Alex Howard

I just want to amplify a point you made a little bit as well because I think it's going to really resonate with a lot of people because, of course, trauma is not just what happens. It's our capacity to respond to and meet what happens along with how it's responded to in the environment around us. And the point you're making around empaths or highly sensitive people don't have the same barriers or boundaries or protections. And so maybe say a bit more about really the consequence of that when traumatic experiences can happen.

Dr Judith Orloff

Well, it's like, I lift this up, this is a cup. It's like I have 50 fingers instead of 5. I'm feeling the cup. I'll just use this as an example. I'm totally involved with this cup and I'm feeling it, sensual aspects of the cup, the energy of the cup, the shape. I mean, I'm integrating all that at this moment and most people pick up the cup, drink, put it down, nothing happens. But for me, because I'm very sensitive to energy, anything I touch is an experience, whereas non-empaths don't necessarily have that same experience.

And I want to make it clear, I am not saying empaths are better than non-empaths. It's nothing like that. It's just a different personality type that in an energetic way of relating in the world that you need to know about if you're an empath or that you love an empath, or if you suspect that you've experienced trauma. As I know growing up as an empathic child, as an only child, I had no support, really. My parents said, just toughen up, dear. Get a thicker skin. You need to get stronger to survive in this world.

And to a sensitive little girl, that means nothing. I'm not that way. And you're trying to tell me to toughen up. I don't know how to deal with any of this and I don't know how to articulate it. And not only that, trauma can come at various levels. It doesn't have to be extreme, brutal, physical or emotional trauma. I was traumatized just by hearing my parents argue all the time. Now, I was in my bedroom alone and I would hear them arguing in another room.

And so in my adult life, I'm triggered when I hear people arguing because it was so... I had no idea what was going on. Why are they arguing? What's happening? Why don't they explain it? Nobody

explained anything. And so the trauma, the more, if you want to say, minor, compared to the major, traumas can linger into your adulthood and they can affect your relationships so that you have emotional triggers to certain things.

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And so that was just one area of trauma for me, the yelling, which is very hard for me to take because I'm triggered by it. And also empaths have a sensitivity to loud noises or any kind of abrupt, sudden, loud, horrible sounds. It just feels awful in the body.

Alex Howard

Yes. I also wonder those more covert traumas, like the less perhaps dramatic and obvious, I wonder if, and I'm thinking out loud here so you can correct my thinking if I'm going down the wrong path, but it strikes me that in some ways to an empath they may almost be more damaging than the really big events because the really big events may well unlock a certain amount of support and response from people around whereas those more covert, subtle things are having that impact but they're not unlocking perhaps the support mechanisms that are needed. Is that right, do you think?

Dr Judith Orloff

That's so right, because we're affected by things, maybe things that other children aren't as deeply affected by but because as empaths we don't have the same protection or the same barriers, we feel everything, our feeling, our emotional empathy, is very strong and our hearts go out to people or we get frightened by things that we don't understand. And then if you're left alone with that, then the mind can make up all kinds of things like I did something bad, they're yelling about me.

You know, that's what trauma can do or the children just make things up that aren't accurate. And so it's important if you have a history of trauma and you're an empath, to really backtrack. And just look, don't judge yourself as you're taking an inventory and looking back and seeing areas that might have frightened you as a child. Maybe you never admitted it before or you think oh, I shouldn't have been frightened by that, such as my parents yelling.

Or it could be a chaotic household where your siblings were just fighting all the time and you were this empath and you couldn't get away from it and you were overwhelmed and that sense of being trapped, that many empaths who have trauma experience, they're trapped. And so then fast forward into their intimate relationships. Guess what issue they have to deal with is feeling trapped, which is one that I've dealt with, so I'm familiar with it.

And I just want to say, I'm just tracking various kinds of trauma right now, but there are all kinds of techniques to use for this to successfully be in relationships and not be triggered by the trauma. But you have to make it into your awareness first so you can deal with it. And sometimes these events, people forget their childhood, it becomes a blur because particularly if it's traumatic, it's just a protective mechanism that the body has to keep things at a distance.

Some people have no childhood memories that I work with in my practice. They just can't access them, you see. And so although I don't ever encourage people dwelling in the past and staying there as they used to do in psychoanalysis for 10, 20, 30 years, they're still back there. It's just, no.

[00:13:39] Alex Howard

But I think also, sometimes, the... Well, another way I want to look at this is that because empaths and highly sensitive people are being knocked a lot by life, because of the sensitivity things are impacting them, I wonder if sometimes it can almost get normalized being in that state and then not realizing the impact that traumas have had and therefore not necessarily really doing that healing work because one is almost just normalized to that state of being triggered and being activated.

Dr Judith Orloff

They're hidden traumas and they're often forgotten traumas. They get put underneath. And what the empath grown up might experience is anxiety and they don't know what that's related to. But if you go back and you see, if you're able to, you do it at the right moment, this is not for everybody to go back. Sometimes when you're just aware that you've experienced trauma and you're getting used to that in your psyche, if that's something you want to get used to, it might be premature to go back and dive right into what happened.

It has to be timing. You don't want to do anything prematurely when it comes to trauma. There has to be something in you that says, this is the right time, I want to do it. And if it gets too intense or too overwhelming, you can stop. You can take a step back, you can do anything you want. You're in charge of this. When you work with a therapist, and I suggest that you do, if you're talking about, even large or small traumas, the process of uncovering the smaller traumas, the larger traumas, it's like a mapping of the system, of the psychological system, that happened from a very young age.

I believe that trauma starts in utero. That's how I perceive it. Because who knows what the mother is doing? If the mother's drinking, if the mother's using drugs, if the mother isn't exercising, if the mother's eating a lot of fries and burgers, it's not intentional trauma to the fetus, but it is trauma. If you really think about it, the fetus is within the body of the woman and everything is connected.

And so you might not think of trauma in that way, but I do. And the birth process, how was the birth process? How did the little empath come out? With the hands out? Some of them hands out, feeling, some empaths they come out like this, with the hand out because they're feeling. And others have a harder time coming out. They're a breech or they're a C-section. I was a C-section.

So I never had to go through the birth canal, which I miss. I needed to get that, I think that stamina, but it wasn't in the cards for my mother because she has some health problems. But it's useful and interesting to go back and review your birth history if you know it.

Alex Howard

Yeah. I'm also interested as you're talking, Judith, just thinking about the relationship between how much of being an empath is something we're born with and how much of that is actually shaped by trauma and by life experiences and yeah. What are your thoughts on that?

Dr Judith Orloff

It's a great question. There can be a couple of answers. Some empaths come out that way. They're inborn temperament, they're born they're sensitive babies, they're sensitive children, they're sensitive, hopefully, teenagers or they sometimes try and shut it off as teenagers, they don't need

it anymore and then they re-blossom a little bit later on. So some are born that way, others are really created from circumstances.

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You can say an empath comes in as a pure empath and if there's birth trauma, then here we go with the beginning of the trauma cycle. But with trauma work, I think it's important, the re-birthing and getting back to the original birth experience, it's really important. I had an analyst who did that with me years ago where he put me in hypnosis and took me back to the womb and what it was like for me in the womb. And if you can remember it, sometimes you need to go into hypnosis.

But if you're interested... I'm really interested in the human psyche and how we operate. And so I have been into therapy, I've been into all kinds of healing techniques my whole life. It's something that interests me for me and so if it interests you for you, it just depends. Whoever is listening, the way you know it interests you, you see if it resonates, they're like little blips of I relate to that, I relate to what she's talking about. And that's where you start with those little blips of interests. You don't force yourself, ever.

Alex Howard

Like you, I love exploring myself and inner work and I sometimes think some people go and watch a football match and I go to therapy. That's just how it goes. Could you say a bit more about some of the signs and some of the ways that trauma shows up more uniquely or more specifically for empaths and highly sensitive people? Some of the signs and some of the things that they might observe?

Dr Judith Orloff

Yes, I'll get into that, but I just want to say sometimes football is therapy for people.

Alex Howard

I hear that.

Dr Judith Orloff

So hold a lot of space for how people get help.

Alex Howard

Just to take that point slightly more... People joke about it, I know it happens in other countries as well, but it's a very British thing for men to want to go to the pub and drink beer. But of course the interesting thing is that that's a way of connecting and it's a way of sharing one's experience and it's a way of having support with other people. And so as much as I'm glad you picked that point up because I was being a bit flippant about something that actually really does have a place of holding and support for people.

[00:20:18] Dr Judith Orloff

Absolutely. People find their comfort where they can and as long as you're not an alcoholic, going to a bar is amazing. I remember traveling through the UK and Ireland. The bars are so cozy. Yeah, everyone who is listening, I hope you can give people a lot of space for what brings them comfort. This life has a lot of challenges, and especially if you're going through healing trauma. So you find comfort in a football game, you find comfort playing golf, you find comfort at the beach. Wherever you do, just be thankful you can find it.

But in terms of how trauma manifests with empaths, I just want to say an empath is that super sensitive on the spectrum of empathy, they are sensitive, they absorb the energy and the emotions of other people, whereas a little bit down the line, the highly sensitive person, a little less absorptive, but tend to be overwhelmed by sensory overload. So the light, sounds, smells, touch, this noise, or even energy, they just get like this, it's too much.

Their systems are wired neurologically differently and the empaths can have all the sensory phenomena like that, but they also have this absorptive phenomena that happens. So it's not better or worse, it's just a little bit more sensitive on the empathic spectrum. And so when empaths come to me in my private practice, they often come to me undiagnosed, because they've been through the medical system.

They've been having anxiety, depression, mystery medical symptoms, mega workups of MRIs, blood work, scans, everything, because they just feel so horrible. They're exhausted. They might be extremely anxious or extremely depressed or just tuned out or on sensory overload. So they have all these really disturbing symptoms that traditional medical science is trying to figure out, but they can't because they don't have the perspective of being an empath. They have a missing piece.

It's less so now than when I first started educating people about this. But you can't really expect your internists to know unless you talk to them about it and ask them about this. But in any case, the symptoms that they experience can be anxiety disorder, depression, chronic fatigue, because empaths get overwhelmed and empaths on chronic overwhelm and undiagnosed empaths can become pretty tired after many years. Because they're so bombarded by everything and they haven't figured out on their own why that's happening and how to stop it, so they can enjoy the beautiful, sensitive creatures that you are and your connection to nature, love, giving, the sky, the earth, the water, people, baths. Empaths love baths.

You can't enjoy the parts of being an empath because you haven't been diagnosed correctly and so you don't know what to do. So that's why I wrote *The Empath's Survival Guide*. And there are 20 questions, self assessment test in the beginning of that book that you need to take because it will tell you how much of an empath you are, or if you're an empath, you might not be, but most likely you are. If you're listening to this and you're going yes, yes, yes. I know what it's like to speak to audiences where their heads are just bobbing up and down the whole time.

Alex Howard

If you lasted this long in the interview, something kept you in this interview, right? There's probably a clue there.

[00:24:28] Dr Judith Orloff

Yeah, exactly. So take the 20 question, self assessment test. See if you're a full fledged empath which is answering, I think, 17 to 20. A moderate empath, which is answering about 11 to 16. And then maybe just a slight empath. But even if you only have a couple of empathic qualities, like for instance, you prefer being with one or two people rather than being in large crowds, or you get overwhelmed by noise, smells or excessive talking, which is very common for empaths.

Or you take on the stress of people you love, where you're actually feeling their anxiety, where you can get a stomach ache listening to another person share their stress because you're vibing with them. In fact, the mirror neuron system is thought to be on overdrive in empaths, the compassion neurons, because they're just turned on. Empaths want to help everybody, and it's too much.

So part of recovering from trauma and recovering from being an empath and not having any skills is learning how to set clear boundaries for yourself, learning how to identify situations that are going to drain you or harm you in some way. And set up the boundary or say no or reorganize yourself so you don't keep putting yourself in situations that are going to drain your energy, your serotonin, the natural antidepressant in your body. And you don't want to be bombarded by stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, which happen when you're on overload.

So as an empath, you have to get diagnosed correctly. If you've had trauma, the way to diagnose it is to go back and remember as much of your childhood as you can. Just peruse it and see, where did I feel uncomfortable? What was it like being in the living room watching TV with my family? What was that like? Or what was it like driving in the car with them? Because I know the car was a terrible place for me because they'd argue in the car.

When an empath is stuck in a car, you can't get out. It's the worst. Unlike some of my patients, who I suggest they actually do get out of the car if the spouse won't stop yelling or abusing them in the car, this insulated area, I suggest they say, please stop and go and take an Uber. And I've had patients who do that. They say, honey, this is out of control. I gotta get out. So sometimes you have to do that. And as an empath, you have to be prepared to do unusual things in terms of self care.

You can't be nice and polite all the time. Just can't. You've got to think about yourself, what do I need? You have to develop inner dialogue and tell yourself, all right, I'm in this situation now, and I'm not happy. What can I do to take care of myself or get out of it if I can? I'm always talking to myself in various places if need be. I'm my best friend, so I go to myself and I ask myself questions, all right, this isn't so good. What should we do here? I have an inner conference with me.

Alex Howard

One of the challenges, I think, for empaths in doing that is because they're sensitive to the impact of their actions and they're feeling the impact on others, that sometimes the putting in place of boundaries or the saying no or the saying, I need this, or, take your example, can you please stop the car, I need to get out, that very action in and of itself is, of course, what feels so challenging and so difficult.

So I'm curious as to what... It sounds like you've got some, obviously some, real skill of knowing what you need and practicing advocating for that. But when you're working with people that are earlier in that journey, what helps them kind of break out of those patterns?

[00:28:38] Dr Judith Orloff

A lot of times we do the psychodrama together where I'm the one who's imposing on the boundaries, and they're the ones who are setting the boundaries, so I can really get into it being the one who's imposing on their boundaries. And they have to develop a voice, first of all, to set a limit with me. And it's very hard. Their voices crack. They start crying.

So I get to go through all that with them until finally a little squeak comes out or a little word or something, and then we just work on it until they're actually speaking sentences, saying, no, that doesn't feel well. It doesn't feel good to me. And I say, well, I don't care what feels good to you. You have to do it. So I could really get into being that person for them, and I'm a safe person, so they know it's me.

Alex Howard

They're practicing as a skill. They're learning to feel safe and comfortable with doing that in a safe place, to then be more able to do it in a less familiar place.

Dr Judith Orloff

Right. And I want to say, you can do this with safe friends who are supportive. Maybe somebody can help you with that and just tell them how awkward you feel, it's a very vulnerable position you put yourself in to set your boundaries if you've never done it before, and especially if you've had physical abuse. If you've ever set a boundary in the past and somebody has hit you because of it or somebody has done terrible things, it's very hard to get it to come out. But that's okay. That's part of it.

And you need tender, loving care of other people around you as you're experimenting with being the person you always deserve to be. You deserve to set boundaries. But when you practice, a mistake my patients make is they always try and want to start with their mothers. Wrong. Don't do that. The mother is the hardest one to deal with, or the father, but don't start with your mother. Start with somebody really easy if you're setting boundaries. Somebody, I don't know, somebody who eats with their mouth open. Or maybe that's not so easy.

Alex Howard

Talking about me, Judith, are you?

Dr Judith Orloff

I don't know, whatever irritates you, set your boundary, with somebody where you just say, you know, a good one is, just some quiet time at home to be able to tell people, if you live with people, I need to close my door now and just be quiet for a little while. Thank you for helping support me with this. And they say, what do you mean you're going in there? It depends who you're dealing with. But hopefully you try the supportive ones, the more supportive ones, and you just go and have that quiet.

But sometimes when an empath is resolving trauma, even if they set the boundary and go into a room, they're going to feel afraid or nervous, which is okay. It's okay. But it just takes practice. And

little by little, the speed that you go at is much like a turtle. Very slow, very careful. Don't shock your system. It's fine. There's no rush. You can't rush yourself through this.

[00:32:11]

And you can be as private as you want about this process. You don't have to tell all your friends that you're doing this, but know that it's a very deep process of healing for you. There's a certain trauma just to being alive. It doesn't compare to the intense trauma, physical or emotional abuse, that we're being raised by narcissistic parents. But life isn't always easy. And so there are various kinds of trauma that could come along other than just early trauma. The trauma of losing someone you love and how to deal with loss. These are big things.

But the healing from trauma needs to be slow. If you're an empath, number one, you need to realize you're an empath and you're an empath healing from trauma. You're not a non-empath healing from trauma. A non-empath might have some different needs than you do, all right? But you have these sensitivities that are precious. You have this connection to life and to energy, and to nature and to your own intuition that you need to strengthen.

And you talk to the flowers, you talk to the sky. You might try and hide it, but you do it. And it's a beautiful thing. And I want to encourage you to do more of it, to do more of what your nature tells you to do. And it does hurt tremendously going through trauma treatment. But in a way it's good hurt because it will help clear the trauma from your body. Because sometimes the trauma lodges in various parts of the physical body.

You have to know your vulnerable point. Mine, and in many empaths, is my solar plexus. When something is off or when something scares me or I feel uncomfortable, I get a stomach ache. And it's always been so since I've been little and it's much less so. But when, as an empath, traumatic events take me by surprise, those are the hardest ones. You know, the ones that you sort of see are coming or if somebody is going to be passing over and it's a longer process, as opposed to a sudden process, it's the suddenness that goes in me.

Empaths need time to process things. They prefer processing time and they don't like to be surprised by some horrible event that happened. But however, sometimes, it can't be prevented and some people just go like that. I had a very close friend go suddenly last year and it's very shocking to the system, anybody's system. And it's traumatic every time you lose somebody. It is, because we love so deeply.

We love very deeply and I want you to appreciate that and channel it towards people who can love you back. Which is another issue because sometimes there's self-inflicted trauma that empaths bring upon themselves when they get involved with narcissists. If there's a toxic attraction between empaths and narcissists, and narcissists have what's called empathy deficient disorder, so they're not wired in the same way to feel empathy.

And as empaths, we've talked about this before, but I think it's an important point for everyone to know is that empaths are susceptible to these people because they reel you in with love bombing and all kinds of promises and the minute you don't do what they want you to do, they become cold, withholding, punishing, gaslight you, and it's just a terrible situation and it could take years and years to dig yourself out of.

[00:36:17]

So I just want to issue this as a warning for empaths, particularly if it's repeated trauma and let's say you had a narcissistic parent and then you choose a narcissistic mate and then you divorce the narcissistic mate and you choose another narcissistic mate, because they're different, this one will be different. So beware of that pattern so you can take better care of yourself and your relationships.

And if you do have to go through that pattern, be very kind to yourself, have a witness state as you study it, educate yourself about narcissists, see if this behavior fits in. Notice this irresistible attraction to them that you might have. But the healing from traumatic upbringing from narcissistic parents requires that you go back to your relationship to the original parent and see what was going on with that. So you can catch and perhaps cut the energetic bond with the unhealthy attachment.

Alex Howard

And I think there's something, just to amplify something you're saying, very powerful about seeing how that dynamic is repetitively playing out to the point that I guess it's almost if someone has that pattern and hasn't done the healing work to break that cycle, that there's something to almost become suspicious about the attraction in the first place. Because it's an attraction towards an old dynamic that I guess is familiar, but it's not healthy.

Dr Judith Orloff

No, it's not healthy. And there's also what's called an auto erotic transference that goes from the father to the mate because you probably had some kind of erotic connection with the father that you associate with a mate. Children, at a very young age, can develop these erotic attachments to the opposite parent or same sex parent sometimes. So you have to be careful.

But the way to heal the relationship with the current narcissist is go back to the original one and begin to feel the grief and the trauma and the trauma healing of what you didn't get from that person and how you so needed it and you so deserved it and you didn't get it. I'm a believer in surrogate parenting. I've had four surrogate mothers in my adult life who have just filled in where my mother wasn't able to give me... I didn't have a bohemian mother, the bohemian hippie mother. And I found one. And I didn't have the communist, rebellious, outrageous, I don't care what you say, mother.

Alex Howard

You had to go and find one.

Dr Judith Orloff

They're there. There are good parents for those of you who are doing this trauma work and you have narcissistic parents, they're very limited, they're not able to give you unconditional love. And as much as you deserve the love, you must realistically see what they're capable of so you don't keep going back to them with your heart.

[00:39:40] Alex Howard

Yes. Judith, I'd love you to say a few words as well around the gifts of being an empath because I'm mindful that we've been talking about the challenges that they face and some of the ways to work with that. But it's easy for one to become fixated on what's wrong. But there's also so much that there's right and maybe you could just speak a little bit to that.

Dr Judith Orloff

There is so much right about anyone who has sensitivity or empathy or cares about each other, the human race, the animals, the little creatures, that we care about what happens on this planet. And you matter to me. I care what happens to you. You are not alone. And empaths help to create that loving net that holds the world up through their love, their connection, their innocence sometimes, their goodness, their lack of pretense, their wanting to heal, wanting to give, maybe too much so, need to learn techniques to protect self and self care.

The gifts of intuition, the gifts of hunches. When you get an inspiration in the morning to take some time in the morning, maybe three minutes, to meditate or just get quiet and ask the loving spirit of the universe to guide you, to guide your day and to know that it's very real, know that you're able to get beyond this mundane world, which is pretty interesting in and of itself, but to get beyond it to an energetic world, to a different world where it's really a world of the heart and a world of expanded perceptions of consciousness rather than just this world that we're in.

You can have different states of consciousness, and that's the joy of being an empath. You get to explore that. I look at a tree when it's moving like this, and I'm mesmerized, mesmerized. I was with a non-empath friend, I said, don't you see it? He goes, no. Of course he doesn't.

Alex Howard

But it strikes me that I think that a lot of the people that I work with therapeutically, part of the reason they come to therapeutic work is because they can't feel or they're not in touch with their feelings. And so it's easy to remember that, yes, being highly sensitive can have its challenges, but so does not being able to make contact with feelings and emotions.

Dr Judith Orloff

That's true. And there's emotional contact that people can make, and there's subtle, energetic contact, which is a bit different because empaths can observe the world in a much different way. If they take the time, all the empaths out there if you want to do this fun experiment, if you take the time to slow down as you're walking down the street and really look at things and really look at the leaves, look at the little flowers coming up in the cracks in the ground, feel the energy of people walking by, feel the sky, feel your position in the universe.

Now, there's a wide range of sensory experiences that are open to you that help you feel connected to all living things. So you could be going to an appointment, you're in New York City, walking down the street, going to an appointment, but you could be doing all this in the meantime. Or if you're in a residential neighborhood or somewhere where it's quiet or where it's a little easier, slow it down. If you want to experiment with expanded perceptions, you have to slow everything down.

[00:43:41]

Empaths are often hypervigilant, so they're always scanning their environment to make sure it's safe. You have to be aware of that. But slow it down so you can observe life and you can begin to see the vital energies of life, the subtle energies of life that you're able to see as an empath if you begin to train yourself. And it's magnificent. At night, after I meditate, I just look out of my window and it's just spectacular.

I just look at the night and the stars, and I have ducks in front of my house. So I hear the ducks and I see, hear, feel the wind. You can use multisenses to experience it if you focus yourself. But empaths tend, especially if they're traumatized, to be overly serious and worry a lot, and they clamp down and they are unable to shift. They're staying in that state. So what you need is the consciousness to come in every day and ask yourself, am I in that state of being overly serious? Is everything so heavy? Is everything a problem?

All right, that's fine. Don't beat yourself up for it, but shift out of that and look out the window. Just look at this earth. Most people miss it because they're so involved with their problems and everything, which I understand. Me, too. I can relate to that. But don't miss what's going on here. And empaths have a chance to experience that great beauty with their sensitivity and experience great love of life and a connection to all of humankind.

So if you're an empath and you can deal with the trauma, whatever you went through, but also know that there's this other world that is within you and it has been all the time, it just hasn't been nurtured, so that you can have more play and experimentation and creativity, once you get in touch with your nature and you don't feel that someone's going to squash it or hurt you.

Alex Howard

Yeah, that's beautiful. I'm mindful we're out of time, but I'll ask you in a minute how people can find out more about you and your work. I also want to highly recommend your book, *The Empath's Survival Guide*, which I know has been a big international best-seller, but is a real, really important book, I think, for people to understand, to help recognize if they have these qualities, but also to have some pathways towards help. But yeah, say more about where people can find you online.

Dr Judith Orloff

That is the initial book, *The Empath's Survival Guide*, the foundational book. And my website is www.drjudithorloff.com and I have an empath support newsletter if you wanted to sign up and just get tips and tricks each month for dealing with being an empath and enjoying yourself and learning how to set boundaries in my workshops and online courses are also on drjudithorloff.com.

Alex Howard

Fantastic. Judith, I really appreciate your time and wisdom today. Thank you so much.

Dr Judith Orloff

You're very welcome.