



Conscious Life presents

Cultivating Self Empathy

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 my good friend Dr Judith Orloff, and we're talking about cultivating self empathy. Judith's got a new book coming out, which we'll talk about in the interview, *The Genius of Empathy*. And one of the things that I really appreciate about this lens is often those of us that have empathic qualities see it as a weakness or something to get rid of. We also often find it much easier to be empathic towards others, but not to use that same quality with ourselves. And yet that quality of self empathy is so important in our trauma healing work.

To give you a little bit of Judith's background. Judith Orloff, MD is the New York Times best-selling author of *The Empath's Survival Guide*. Dr Orloff is a psychiatrist, an 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*, and her upcoming book, *The Genius of Empathy*. And Dr Orloff's work has been featured on The Today Show, CNN, Oprah Magazine, and The New York Times. Well, firstly, Judith, welcome and thank you so much for joining me again.

Dr Judith Orloff

Thank you. I'm so happy to be here and have another conversation.

Alex Howard

So, Judith, your new book is coming out in a couple of months from the point of this coming out. I love the title, and you were also kind enough to give me a preview copy and have a look through a few months ago, which I greatly enjoyed. The title is *The Genius of Empathy*, and I think a lot of people see empathy as a vulnerability or a weakness or a problem, and I love the way that you're reframing and repositioning that. Before we come into some of the substance of the book, do you want to just say a few words about what empathy is? So what is empathy and what does it mean to be an empath?

[00:02:34] Dr Judith Orloff

Yes. Well, I'm so excited about writing this book because empathy is a powerful healing force that you can tap into in your lives to heal trauma or other issues. And it's about connecting to other people. It's just feeling what they're feeling and empathizing with that. Not judging that, but just feeling what they're feeling and sending heart energy to them and helping the situation and also feeling what you're feeling and sending the healing energy of empathy towards yourself and what you've been through in your life and what you may be going through in this moment.

And so it's a missing piece to healing. And I just want to make a point that it's not about having empathy 100% of the time for everyone, that if I did that as an empath, I would be non functional. All right? It's making discriminating choices about feeling empathy and how much you want to get involved and how much you want to give the heart energy and just say namaste and keep on going. So it's a discernment choice, and empathy is something that's essential to heal trauma. And the genius of empathy is that it can do that.

Alex Howard

Yes.

Dr Judith Orloff

It can help you heal trauma.

Alex Howard

I want to come back to that in a moment, but before we do that, I just want to really amplify the title of the book, because so often people see empathy as being something that's wrong, or the fact that they feel more than other people do. And it's like the emphasis is, how do I stop this happening? And I love the reframe, but also the point you've just made, which I think is so important, is there can be choice here. It's not like we live in a place of no boundary and empathy or we don't have any at all.

Dr Judith Orloff

Right. Exactly. The word boundary is key and the word choice is key, but I'm presenting empathy as a healing force that you can tap into and that you have discernment about, all right? You don't want to just jump into other people's bodies and feel what they're feeling. You just don't want to do that. There's too much suffering in the world. And as a psychiatrist, as an empath myself, I'm very discerning about my choices of empathy. I can feel empathy for somebody and then send them compassion, which is sending them heart energy.

Empathy is the actual feeling what they're feeling and resonating with another human soul, part of our human family, all right? But compassion is when you can send them some love, some loving kindness, which can help ail everything, help cure everything that's ailing, because compassion is an outcropping of empathy. But empathy is the actual feeling of what's going on. And empaths often have a hard time with feeling overwhelmed and sensory overload, and they feel that there's just an on off switch, and that's just not true.

[00:05:50]

In *The Genius of Empathy*, I give you a number of strategies, pages of strategies, on how to keep your center, how to make choices about how to channel your empathy, so that it's healing for yourself, it's healing for others, and it can be healing for the world.

Alex Howard

We're talking in this interview particularly about self empathy, and I think often people think about empathy as being what we do for others, and often we're much kinder towards other people than we are towards ourselves. And so maybe you can define a little bit what we mean by self empathy and then we'll talk a bit about how that then relates to healing trauma.

Dr Judith Orloff

Self empathy is being able to feel for what you've been through in your life, maybe starting from infancy or maybe even starting during pregnancy, because sometimes trauma starts way back in utero. It starts the minute you're incarnated here, and it just depends on the mother, and it depends on you. And so what you've been through in this life. Everybody's been through a lot. I'll just put it that way. As a psychiatrist, I know that. Some may seem like they are suffering more than others. It may seem that way. But what goes on on the inside of people, you really don't know until you empathize with them and talk to them.

Alex Howard

Sometimes it's the people where it appears the least amount has gone on, that the most has gone on. Right? Because the defense structure is nothing to be seen here. Everything's fine.

Dr Judith Orloff

Exactly. And because, this is my view, because we're on Earth, I see this as a school to learn. And it's a very rugged school at times. Very rugged school. Nobody would pick abusive parents or narcissistic parents or alcoholic parents or siblings. Who in their right mind would pick that? And yet you might be in a family such as that. So the empathy starts with being born to a family that can't see you or hear you or understand you.

Particularly if you're an empath and you're a sensitive soul and you don't have the same filters that other people have, and you feel everything and your parents don't see you, and your parents are not taking care of your gorgeous sensitivity that deserves to be cherished and nurtured. That's where the trauma starts, and that's where you have to, if you can do it, and it's a beautiful thing to show self empathy is to speak in, and this isn't self pity, not self pity, it's having empathy for yourself and what you've been through and that you've survived it.

And you're here listening to us talking in a trauma conference. I mean, that's awesome. To really give yourself every benefit of the doubt, every second chance, everything you've been through. Perhaps you're not proud of your behavior because you were programmed with certain beliefs. You can start to heal today. Whatever your past has been, no matter how lost you feel, no matter how confused you feel, you can start with self empathy today simply by saying, I recognize you. I feel you, meaning yourself. I'm going to honor you. You've been through a lot, and I love you, and I'm going to befriend you.

[00:09:29]

So this is the part of yourself, it can be your inner child, or it can be the wounded adult. So it's about having feeling for yourself. And I know as a therapist, I've spoken to many therapists over the years where I don't know if you feel this way, Alex, but it's so much easier to have empathy for our patients than it is myself.

Alex Howard

You're feeling into my next question. That's exactly where I was going to go.

Dr Judith Orloff

Why is that? It's human nature. It's much harder to heal the self and much easier to help heal other people. It just is for most. I'm not going to make any generalizations, but if that's you, that's okay. But you can start with a consciousness, a loving state of consciousness. Say I'm an empath. I don't really have the filters that other people have. I'm very sensitive. I can sense animals, I can sense plants, I can feel the love for people. I feel the connection to my fellow humankind and the Earth.

But I'm so overwhelmed when I go to the market and there's so many people there, or I can't go to big gatherings because I just walk out almost non functional or just on overload. I have empathy for that. These are qualities I want to develop and strengthen and learn how to set limits and boundaries, as is true of all the trauma work. But it's about having empathy for that beautiful self. Not doing what so many people do is to beat yourself up and think there's something wrong with you, that something's not right.

And I want to say that everything is right. There's never been anything wrong with you if you're an empath. And I want to just reassure everybody, nothing wrong with you. It's just that now, whatever point in your life, maybe you're 15, 30, 70, 102, whatever you are, if you're starting now, that's the perfect time. That's the perfect time. Don't think oh, I've lost time. People write me emails, oh, I've lost so much time, if only I had this material when I was 20.

Well, yeah. But the teacher comes when the student is ready and I really believe that. And so if you're opening up now, if you're awakening as an empath now, if you're willing to heal your trauma now, now is your time. And have empathy for yourself for all those years you didn't know.

Alex Howard

I want to go back to what you were saying about how the empathy towards others and not ourselves. Because what came to my mind was a little kind of running story of being sat in clinic with patients through the day and having this real empathy and spaciousness and open heartedness and then sort of getting home and one of the kids being in need and it sort of narrows a little bit.

And then my wife has got something going, it's narrowed a bit more and then it gets to myself, it's gone and it's like, for goodness sake, Alex, stop whinging, get over it, sort yourself out. And it's just interesting that it's so much easier to hold that for others. And yet with ourselves, we're just so much more critical and intolerant and impatient of what's going on.

[00:12:57] Dr Judith Orloff

That's so true. And everyone who's listening to that, you have permission if that's how you feel, you have permission to feel that way and to be aware of it. I think that one purpose of this talk is to just be aware of where you're at now in a non critical, non judgmental way and just begin from the beginning. I love the beginner's mind. And begin to show yourself self empathy and begin to tune into the, I'm going to use the word, mystical people that you are, the mystical, spiritual connected to nature, loving animal people that you are. You start with all of your assets. Look at the beautiful sensitivities.

I believe empaths and empathy are going to save this Earth. So I have very strong feelings. I know what it feels like. There's the Mother Teresa effect, which is so interesting. They did this study at Harvard where they have one person doing an act of empathy, whatever it might be, and they had other people witnessing it, and their immunity increased by simply watching the empathic act, their immunity, they measured the saliva and the immune function increased. And so healing can occur. If I watched you bend down and help a child who fell, that will help me as well.

And so empathy has that sparking effect. So you start with yourself. Everyone is listening today. I think that's our call to action and to begin with yourself, no matter how hard you've been on yourself. I mean, I know what people do. They just beat, beat, beat, beat, beat. And I have a Taoist teacher and he says spiritual progress is just beating yourself up a little bit less each day.

Alex Howard

That's great.

Dr Judith Orloff

This is realistic.

Alex Howard

Well, it strikes me that inner criticism and berating also has subtle qualities because sometimes it masks as sort of trying to motivate ourselves or kind of trying to get ourselves to kind of move forwards. And in a way, I find that often the way that people approach their trauma healing work is from the same place that, in a way, is what they learned as a result of the trauma.

So what I mean by that, if someone learned that they were only loved for what they did and what they achieved, and so they sort of developed this sort of pushing quality that then becomes the place from which the trauma healing is approached, which is a sort of pushing and harshness about that. And so I'm curious as to what helps us soften that. If we can recognize there's a lack of self empathy, what are some of the steps that we can go on to start to cultivate it?

Dr Judith Orloff

Yes, you could begin today by just taking a minute of quiet and going inside, or even less if you have it, a minute is a lot of time in a certain sense, and even less, and go in, take a deep breath, calm yourself and say something positive and empathic, such as, I've been through so much and I really want to understand you and be your friend. Talking to your inner self. You have to begin a dialog, an empathic dialog with what's inside of you as you have, you can call it an inner self or the

empowered adult, or they're different parts of the self, or the wounded child or the joyful child, but you want to just talk to yourself.

[00:16:58]

You have a very precious part inside of you that you need to acknowledge. And it doesn't have to be put in spiritual terms if that's not your language, but it's an inner self. It's part of you that you need to begin to dialog with. I dialog a lot with myself. I'm always talking to myself in a way that if I'm in a situation that's really difficult and I'm uncomfortable, I will just say, this will be alright. This is going to be short lived. This too will pass. You will be able to get out of it, and you don't have to stay here.

Those are empathic ways I can talk to myself during those moments. And it's so much better than, oh, my God, what's wrong with me? I can't connect to these people. I need these people. They're part of who I work with. You know how the mind goes. But to develop self empathy, I just want to make the point, it comes from the heart. It doesn't necessarily come from the mind, all right? The mind can be very gentle with yourself too. The mind can be kind and it can be gentle, and it can say nice things about you, or it can flip and turn into a torture chamber and say horrible things about you.

I mean, you're saying horrible things about yourself, and you must stop that momentum. Part of trauma healing is not indulging thoughts that are going to torture you, all right? And sometimes trauma manifests by these negative thoughts gathering momentum in the head, and it's almost subconscious where you might be doing something else, but under the surface, you're such a terrible person, you're never going to be able to get through this. What's wrong with you? Blah, blah, blah.

So you have that going on, but you want to make yourself aware of all this. It's a little shocking when you're healing from trauma, it's shocking what we say to ourselves. But you need to make a commitment that you don't want to torture yourself and that you're willing and able to find a kinder voice inside to start that inner dialog up and connect intuitively with yourself. This isn't just with your mind. It's about connecting to your gut and asking yourself.

The next step after you talk to yourself is, when I tune in, am I comfortable, let's see, with this person? No. Okay. But everyone else likes them, but I'm not comfortable with them. Maybe I should just go along with everybody else. No, you need to be cautious. You're getting a red flag, so you need to pause. So that's part of the intuitive inner dialog that goes along with empathy, as it's about the empathy comes in trusting your intuition.

Alex Howard

And in a way, also, what you're saying is that to say yes to ourselves, to say yes to that intuition, we've also got to be able to say no to other people. Right? So in a way, part of the self empathy is also the boundaries that we have with others.

Dr Judith Orloff

Yes, it's a no or it's a not now or thank you for asking me, but I'm over committed at this point and learning how to empathically discuss people, which I talk about in the book, is to use a tone of voice that's calm, that's neutral or that's loving. And you can say a loving no. I love what you do

and I just can't help you right now because I'm just too overloaded myself. And you could say it in a very nice way so that, as opposed to I'm just too busy or I have too much to do now, how can you ask me this? Some kind of brusque response that is so hurtful, especially to empaths when they're talked to that way. It's very brusque and it hurts.

[00:21:06]

Empaths hurt. They have feelings on their sleeve. Being an empath is like holding something with 50 fingers instead of 5. We are sensitive beings and that goes for trauma too. We might experience little traumas throughout the day and that's why what we're talking about right now is so important, because this is the game plan for empathy, in terms of self empathy. What you do when people say insensitive things. What is the first thing you're going to do in terms of self empathy?

You're going to start talking to yourself. You're going to start telling yourself you don't want this to go on. You need to get out of this relationship right now. Conversation. Just make an excuse, get out. You don't want us to sit there. What empaths do, and it's a big mistake because they're so polite and they want to give everybody their say, is sit there when they're being abused and that is not acceptable. The minute you sense some weird energy like that, I don't care if you're right or wrong, but if you're sensing it, you take a breath and you excuse yourself. You don't want to be around that.

And that's part of self empathy and the boundaries you set in terms of trauma healing is to not give these people all this time to talk to you and say these negative things. You don't want to hear what's going on. Sometimes if people start up with me, it's not so much negative things they say about me, but it's about too much information. They're revealing so much information about themselves. This happened last night and my brain is done, I'm done for the day. I'm in another space and I just say, I hear you want to talk, but I'm done for the night, I can't listen. And then she said, oh, okay, fluttery. But you have to say it.

Alex Howard

Yeah.

Dr Judith Orloff

It's hard for empaths to speak up as part of their trauma healing, but finding self empathy is finding your voice and it's finding your loving voice that you must find. And you won't hold on to it all the time, but you can go searching for it again. I go searching for it. I hear whatever trigger I have or negative thought that's beginning to torture me, and I say, there you are again. Take a breath. Stop it right in motion. Stop that thought. Breathe. Don't let it go on to the next thought. It's really fine to do that. You don't want to give all the negative voices in your head free range to get you. And that's what happens with trauma. They've had free range to get you all these years, so empathy will help you turn that around.

Alex Howard

One of my... A big realization for me on my journey was realizing that we can say no to other people and it doesn't have to be rude, doesn't have to be unkind, doesn't have to be provocative or antagonistic. It can be very loving, but it can just be a very clear, I don't want to do that. And I think as an empath, when we're very sensitized to how the other person may feel, we have all kinds of

narratives that if we say no, it's going to hurt that person, they're going to feel rejected and this and that. But in a way, it was a kind of miracle realization to just be able to say no. And it not to be anything other than a kind of loving expression of this is my truth, and I don't want to do that thing, or, that thing's not okay.

[00:24:43] Dr Judith Orloff

Right. Because you're coming from an empathic place. I could feel it in you. But if you were coming from an irritated place or a frustrated place, why are you standing there talking so much to me when I'm clearly going home? Which I want to say, you might feel that way, you might have a number of voices about someone who's trespassing a boundary, but the voice you want to choose is the empathic no. You see, that's where knowing the self and getting used to this inner dialog thing is to be aware of it and to be able to say, I'm not going to be frustrated.

A lot of people have a hard time because they think empathy means, like, being a saint or always loving yourself or always being compassionate for other people, and it just isn't. That's not what it is. It's about learning to have empathy for yourself and then making a choice about where you want to come from with the world or these people. You see, that's where the healing of trauma comes in, realizing you have the choice. You're the decider. It's not your parents, it's not your teachers, it's not your ex who is abusive. It's you. And when you begin to do some of these exercises, you can heal, but you are the decider, not anybody else. So it's very liberating when you actually get that.

Alex Howard

Yeah. It strikes me, Judith, that doing our healing work takes energy. And if that energy is being given out to everyone else and we're not putting those boundaries in place, there's often not enough holding and space left over to be able to show up to ourselves in those ways. And so, in a way, that saying no to others is part of what's necessary to have enough capacity to really hold ourselves in that self empathy way.

Dr Judith Orloff

That's right. And just because I say no to somebody at 09:00 at night because I'm done talking or doing anything but fun light things at the moment, that that doesn't make you less empathic. So I think that's where people go wrong. They feel like they have to be 100% empathic all the time, and that's not a human being. And I am I actually was with this woman being empathic, but I was just empathic to myself, and I was talking to her, and she was all flustered and bye bye, which is great, but I want to give people permission to not feel like they have to be a saint with empathy.

Sometimes empathy is just setting the boundary, taking yourself home, stopping the torturing thoughts, going and taking a bath, going under the covers, being with your stuffed animals, whatever you do to self soothe.

Alex Howard

One of the things that I found in the office is the more I'm direct with people, even if that's sometimes having conversations that may be a little bit tricky around someone's performance, around a certain issue, in a way, the safer everyone feels because there's not this sort of what's not being said or this constant... In my early years of my career, I wanted everyone to like me and I

wanted to keep the peace all of the time so I wouldn't have such conversations that needed to be had.

[00:28:13]

But in a way, what I realized over the years, in a way, it was a bit crazy making because people then don't know where they stand. Is everything good? Is it bad, is it okay? Is it this, is it that? And actually, the more empathy we have, but also that empathy coupled with an honesty and an authenticity and a directness, in a way that actually builds a sense of safety for all of us.

Dr Judith Orloff

I think it does. In terms of empaths, feeling empathy for themselves in the world situation that's so tumultuous and so full of suffering that it's important that you give yourself permission to not dive into it, to back off, to take care of yourself. Being an empath, a healthy, empowered empath, doesn't mean watching the news 24 hours a day. It will destroy you. It's so much suffering. There's so much suffering here on Earth, but you want to do what you can.

And self empathy in that respect is saying no to the news and yes to a walk in nature or playing with your dog or doing something else. And that's fine. If that's your priority, you need to be able to set that priority. You don't want to be glued to the world situation, feeling desperate and in pain all the time. You want to be a functional empath. You want to be able to show yourself empathy and to show others empathy and to know when you have nothing to give and all you want to do is be quiet.

Because empaths need to decrease their stimulation when they're overloaded. And so it's about learning about your inner self and finding that balance. And as an empath and an intuitive, each day I tune into myself. This isn't something we just decide now and then you have a program. This is every day, how do I feel about doing whatever it is I'm doing or talking? How do I feel about it? What would I prefer limiting? Because sometimes it's a surprise how I feel during the day.

And empathy is, well, I'm more tired than I thought today so I don't really want to do all those things that I had planned. And it's making adjustments. And see, it's important to make adjustments in your life according to your empathic voice and your intuition. And so it's a moment to moment kind of thing. It's not just one size fits all. It's today, I'm a new person, what do I need today? And how can I create a life today, living in the moment because that's all we have, that's the happiest possible day for me?

Alex Howard

Yeah. What helps us if we recognize that we're too consumed in external events, be that global news events, be that things in our local community, maybe things in our own family dynamic and we're feeling everything, what helps us put that boundary in place? And I know in your previous book, also your upcoming book, there's tools and exercises to this, but what are some of the things, the basic principles, that can help us to start to put those edges and those boundaries in place, particularly those more energetic boundaries?

[00:31:46] Dr Judith Orloff

Yes, well, a good motivation would be knowing how painful it is to be on sensory overload. As any empath who knows that feeling, and I know that feeling well, I've had it many times throughout my life, it is so painful with too much coming at you too fast because you can't say no or you can't limit your commitments and it's just awful. It's just nothing I want to repeat. So that for me is a motivation that I do not want to get to that state. I want to be in my happy zone. I don't want to get so overloaded by sensory stimuli that I'm going to have to recover for two days.

And that can happen. And everyone who's listening, perhaps it's happened to you or you just sometimes people feel that way all the time, they just don't even want to go out anymore. They've given up on going out as it's too overstimulating out there. But the great gift of self empathy is that you can self regulate and you're healing yourself each time you show yourself self empathy. And so you begin to build up your reserves. You're building positive energy with self empathy, as opposed to letting all those other voices go rampant and wild in your head, which is not what you want, but if you're just a little bit, oh, I'm going to do something nice for myself.

I'm going to make myself some tea. Simple things. I want to just emphasize the simple things are so important. You don't have to do big things. I'm going to make myself some tea and put a little honey in it. And it's so good to be able to do that. The joy of little things. I'm really a big proponent of that, of little things and the empathy that you could show yourself by saying, I'm going to make my cup of tea instead of letting this person go on and on and complain or berate me. I don't want to do that.

Alex Howard

It strikes me that part of this is where is our attention, our energy and our focus? It's like, is it outside of us? Is it in the other person? Or is it in the cup of tea and the honey? And actually in this moment, in that grounding way?

Dr Judith Orloff

It's in the moment. Yeah, everything's in the moment. Everybody is not guaranteed anything except for the moment. So I'm a big believer in a day at a time and living in the moment as an empath who's discerning and practices self empathy and gets a handle on their own energy field and their own needs every day. And the voices that say, you're a terrible person, you're not worth it. All the negative voices from the past, these are not true, by the way. Everybody, not true. Everybody has worth. And everybody can start to heal right now. Even if you weren't healed at all before.

You can start right now. If you're listening to us and something in you is getting sparked or inspired, this is the place to start. As you want to move, react to things that move you. You want to tune into people. I mean, maybe you don't relate to some people, and that's fine too, but you need to know that. And with trauma, that inner voice of listening just gets obscured because you don't trust yourself. You've given the abusive parent the power. And this self empathy lets you reclaim your power. And that's what I love about it.

It takes awareness. And you'll feel the relief. You'll feel a lightning up. You'll feel moments of happiness, more moments than what you had before. You'll forget about the negative voices for longer and longer periods of time, and you'll have other thoughts that come in. You see, the healing process of trauma is the new thoughts that are coming in the horizon. So the thoughts of, oh,

maybe I should build a house I've been dreaming of for 30 years. Maybe I should actually build this little cottage because I want my cottage. That just is off the tip of my mind. But whatever you've been dreaming about, go do it.

[00:36:17] Alex Howard

It also strikes me, Judith, that one of the impacts of trauma and one of often the reasons why we're impacted in the way that we are is that we don't have those core emotional needs of love and safety met in the way that we need. And what I'm really hearing in what you're saying is that the heart of the power of what you're describing is cultivating the place inside of us of empathy and softness and spaciousness, which was often absent. And because it was absent, by bringing it present, it is part of the healing. Right? It's not just it makes things a bit easier. It's actually part of the healing work.

Dr Judith Orloff

Absolutely. It's part of the ongoing healing work for healing from life, too. I just wanted to bring up an aspect of self empathy that has come up a lot in my practice where I've worked with women and men who've both been abused by their parents. They have terrible, abusive relationships with their parents, and then time goes by and then the parent gets sick and is on the verge of dying and is going through the dying process and they come to me and they say, what should I do? This woman, horribly, or man horribly, abused me. And yet they're asking me to take care of them in their final days. What should I do? I mean, this has come up a lot.

Alex Howard

Yeah, I've heard that story a lot before as well. It's a really hard one.

Dr Judith Orloff

Well, my feeling is your karmic debt is paid. If you've been abused and you've survived it, you don't have to do anything. You don't have to do anything. But if you want to do something, that's different. If you feel drawn to help this parent who is so abusive, help them in their final moments, then you can do that too. And what I found is that most people choose to be with the parent and they're happy about their choice, and the ones that chose not to be with the parent are also happy with their choice.

So the self empathy comes in where I'm just telling you, if you're faced with the situation, you do what you want to do, and either way, you're free and clear. Nothing, you don't have any more to pay. You're done. So that sometimes frees people. So I wanted to share that experience because it happens with elderly parents and many people are faced with that. So just know the self empathy, whatever you choose to do, you don't do it, fine. You do it, get satisfaction from it.

Alex Howard

Yeah. I think that's very important. There's something, it's really important in what you're saying around there aren't hard truths around this. In a way, there's your truth. And the pathway to that truth is empathy, that whatever you're experiencing is okay, but give it space and honor it. Because in a way, again, part of the impact of childhood trauma is often our truth isn't honored and respected. And so part of the healing work is to allow ourselves to be in our truth.

[00:39:38] Dr Judith Orloff

Absolutely. And strange things happen at the end of life. I had one patient who was abused by her mother, and her mother was an alcoholic. And then she developed pretty bad Alzheimer's and she forgot to drink. So she got sober. At a certain age, she got sober and she became nice.

Alex Howard

Wow, that's a great story.

Dr Judith Orloff

My patient is like, here I finally have the mother that I like, so I'm going to just set aside everything and enjoy our last year together. And it was a choice she made, but the Universe offered her this amazing gift that she sees as a gift. So the mother no longer drank. It was the only way she was going to stop drinking.

Alex Howard

Wow.

Dr Judith Orloff

I know. It's kind of magical.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful. And it also strikes me that empathy is part of what allows us to have our experience, even when our experience is difficult and uncomfortable. And so to take the example of the abusive parent, if our truth is that we are in a place of anger and rage and hate and we need the distance, then what a deep violation to ignore that and to continue to push through. But empathy also, by allowing ourselves to have those places, is actually, ironically, what allows us to move through those places.

Dr Judith Orloff

Yes. And to not spiritually or emotionally bypass anything. I'm not suggesting ignoring your anger or your fear or your self loathing or your feelings of being inferior and all that. I'm just saying find another voice to counter that. And the empathy, as you heal the negative voices, which aren't true in terms of who you are, you see, but this is adding something to your toolkit, and without it, the other side is too much power. There's too many things that could come in and hijack your brain with your thoughts.

But when you begin to practice self empathy, the other recedes. You see, healing occurs. And the reality of healing with empathy occurs. And I want everyone to know that, that things will get better. The trauma becomes softer and more far away. You have more courage to deal with whatever the key event was and then keep moving forward. It just helps you with the trauma, healing the trauma process.

[00:42:14] Alex Howard

Yeah. That's beautiful. Judith, I'm mindful we're nearly out of time, but I'd love you to say a bit more about your work, what people can find, your new book, *The Genius of Empathy*, is available for pre order, but yeah, say a bit more about what you've got that's coming up.

Dr Judith Orloff

Yes, well, anyone who wants to reach me or sign up for my Empath support newsletter, you can go to www.drjudithorloff.com. And my new book, *The Genius of Empathy*, is coming out very soon. You can get a preorder, and I'm going to be traveling around and talking about it and having these dialogs with you. I want to hear what you have to say and how empathy helps you and how it's hard to contact.

So it's a vibrant conversation that I'm going to be having. I'm speaking at all kinds of places, so I hope to meet you along the way. And I also have a new course coming out on *The Genius of Empathy* at the end of November, which is on my website. It's with the Shift network, and I invite you all to attend that. It's a seven week online course if you prefer online. So it's drjudithorloff.com.

Alex Howard

Amazing. Thank you, Judith, so much. Really recommend Judith's book, *The Genius of Empathy*. And thank you, Judith, for being with me.

Dr Judith Orloff

You're very welcome.