

Judith Orloff, MD

**4 Ways
Empathy Can
Empower You
& Your
Relationships
Ebook**

Embrace the Superpower
of Empathy

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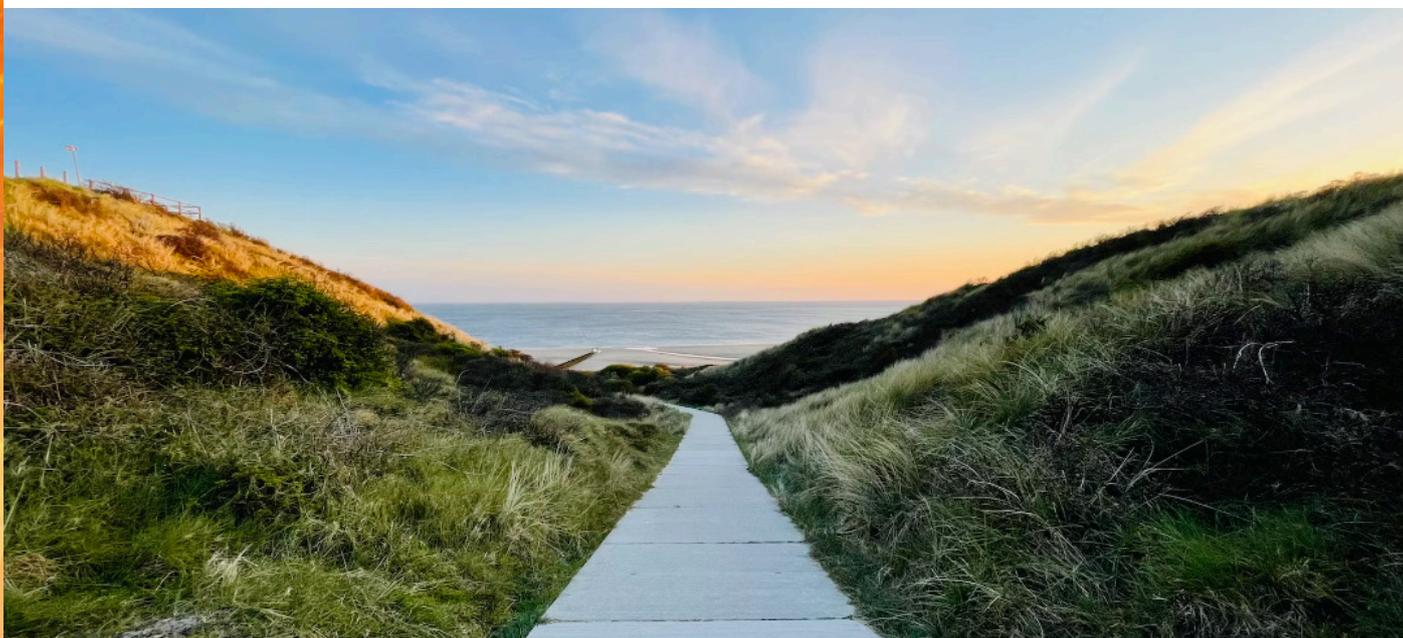
Judith Orloff, MD



Judith Orloff, MD is a New York Times bestselling author with the new book [**The Genius of Empathy: Practical Tools to Heal Yourself, Your Relationships and the World**](#), which offers powerful skills to tap into empathy as a daily healing practice in your life and relationships. She has also written **The Empath's Survival Guide and Thriving as an Empath**. A UCLA Psychiatric Clinical Faculty Member, she blends the pearls of conventional medicine with cutting edge knowledge of intuition, empathy,

energy medicine, and spirituality. Dr. Orloff specializes in treating highly sensitive people in her private practice and online internationally. Her work has been featured on The Today Show, CNN, Oprah Magazine, the New York Times and USA Today. Dr. Orloff has spoken at Google-LA, TEDx U.S. and TEDx Asia. Explore more at [**www.drjudithorloff.com**](http://www.drjudithorloff.com)

Introduction: Beginning Your Healing Path



I'm a physician with fourteen years of conventional medical training at USC and UCLA. I am also an empath. In my medical practice of over three decades, I specialize in treating empaths and highly sensitive people. Throughout my career of working in private practice, hospitals, nursing homes and substance abuse programs I've witnessed the extraordinary healing power of empathy in my patients and myself.

We are each a work of art, and we create our own unique masterpiece. Empathy helps us know and appreciate this about one another. The word empathy comes from the ancient Greek *empathia* which means passion or suffering. I agree with the "passion" part but disagree with the stereotype that primarily links empathy with discomfort or feeling overwhelmed. With the tools outlined in this ebook, the "suffering" part can become optional. You've taken the first step. Now you can choose to ignite your empathic superpowers.

Empathy itself is a healing act, whether you're on the giving or receiving end. It's a way of saying you matter to me, the earth matters to me, being kind to myself and others matters to me. You are not invisible or forgotten. You are seen. You are heard. You are appreciated.

As a teenager in Los Angeles, I got heavily involved with drugs to block out my sensitivities. (I'm not recommending this to you!) Then, with my empathy numbed, I could cope. I was able to attend parties and hang out at shopping malls just like my friends and would feel fine. What a relief that was! In my memoir **Second Sight**, I write about how I turned to drugs to shut off my intuition and empathic abilities. But after a near tragic car accident during which I went over a 1,500-foot cliff in Topanga Canyon at 3AM in a tiny Austin Mini-Cooper, my parents were scared to death and sent me to a psychiatrist.

Naturally, I fought the therapist the whole way. But, in fact, this angel in human form was the first person to help me realize that to become whole, I had to embrace my sensitivities, not run from them. This was the start of my healing and self-acceptance as an empath. Since I was so frightened by my childhood empathic and intuitive experiences, part of my evolution as a physician and a woman has been to learn to embrace these abilities. They are precious and need to be nurtured and supported. That's why I specialize in helping empaths in my psychiatric practice and workshops.

Yes, we empaths can flourish! Empathy is the medicine the world needs.

I come from a lineage of powerful, caring and compassionate women who were my heroes and inspiration. My mother and my aunt, for instance, as very young physicians in Philadelphia during WW II, staffed an inner-city emergency room. My grandmother was a flamboyant seer who'd heal her neighbors with her hands during the lean years of the Great Depression. These wonderfully talented and complex women were my role models; for better and for worse, I've shared both their strengths and apprehensions on my own path to self-realization.

One of the many gifts my mother gave me is the tenacity to follow my dreams and a love of learning. But from her life, I also learned the dire necessity to heal negative emotions in order to achieve my own inner peace and to help my patients do the same. The power of love and empathy became my guide. We must respect the voice within that says, "Honey, be kind to yourself. You are enough. You are beautiful." This compassion is in each of us: the ultimate answer, the one I aspire to, teach my patients, and shout from the rooftops.

I offer this ebook to all kindred souls and deep feelers to help them learn how to manage their empathy without burning out while deepening their inner dialog and connection with others. In it I first discuss the importance of self-care and the ability to show empathy for yourself. In Chapter Two you'll learn the art of empathic listening and how to hold supportive space for others. This type of listening is being present with someone in an authentic, accepting and supportive way. It helps others heal through the quality of your presence.

In Chapter Three you'll learn how to give empathy without burning out or becoming a martyr. I also discuss how to be compassionate without absorbing the stress or negative energies of others. Chapter Four discusses how to empathize with others, even those you don't like. You'll learn the 3 A's of empathy (Attitude, Attention, and Adjustment) and how to respond with compassion without attacking others if you're triggered. You'll also learn how to develop conscious speech.

What is Your Empathy Quotient (EQ)? Take this Quiz

Before you can fully tap into your empathic superpower it's important to know your Empathy Quotient. Just as intelligence can be measured with an IQ, your Empathy Quotient (EQ) can also be determined.

Empathy is when you care about others in both sadness and joy. It is a skill that can be developed through mindful awareness. To avoid empathy overload, it's important to learn to center and protect yourself and practice on-going self-care.

The world needs more empathic leaders, parents and people in every profession. Empathy allows you to understand where another person is coming from even if you don't agree with them. It bridges differences and opens communication with others.

Take the following quiz to determine your EQ:

What is Your Empathy Quotient (EQ)?

1. Are you sensitive to others, care about them, and want to help?
2. Do you listen with your heart, not just your head?
3. Can you hold space for others to express their people's emotions?
4. Can you listen without needing to fix someone's problem immediately?
5. Are you capable of the give and take of intimate relationships?
6. Are you intuitive and sensitive to other's needs?
7. Do you care about the greater good, and the wellbeing of the Earth?

Calculate Your Results:

- Responding "yes" to six to seven questions you have an extremely high empathy quotient
- Responding "yes" to four to five questions you have a high EQ
- Responding "yes" to two to three questions you have a moderate EQ
- Responding "yes" to zero to one question you have a lower EQ

No matter what your EQ is at this point, it's always possible to develop more empathy and to protect and center yourself if you are experiencing empathy overload or if you're an empath who absorbs the stress of the world.

***This ebook is intended to give you a taste of the healing power of empathy in your life. To learn more and go deeper (without taking on the stress of others), please refer to my book **The Genius of Empathy: Practical Skills to Heal Your Sensitive Self, Your Relationships and the World.**

Chapter 1: Building Self-Empathy



Your body, mind, and spirit are grateful for any kindness you might show them. Befriending all your emotions as well as being kind to yourself is essential for developing self-empathy. The more you apply this skill to your own life and experience the benefits, the more natural it will be to have empathy for others.

Self-empathy is the bedrock of healing in difficult situations. It goes further than ordinary empathy, which is typically more spontaneous and geared toward attuning with other people. If you wake in the morning feeling overwhelmed or anxious, make self-empathy your priority by asking, “How can I be kind to myself today?”

Be Kind to Yourself

As a psychiatrist, I know how hard we can all be on ourselves. My Daoist teacher says that spiritual progress occurs when you stop beating yourself up a little bit less each day. Gradually, replace harsh thoughts with kind ones. Focus on what you have to be grateful for rather than what is lacking.

We are all works in progress. What makes humanity so beautiful is when we strive to achieve compassion and goodness in all we do. Many times, it's easier to be kinder to other people than ourselves. That is human nature. However, be inspired to shower yourself with more gentleness each day. For instance, say "I did a great job in a difficult situation," or "I paced myself today because I felt tired." Being hard on yourself only saps your vitality. The miracle of kindness is that it will uplift your spirit and is a balm for what ails you in a multitude of ways.

Loving oneself isn't always easy, but it is a worthy goal. With self-compassion, you can thrive as a sensitive person and enjoy your gifts. Set an intention to be aware of when you are beating yourself up. Then gently and lovingly reframe your focus to what you have done well.

Nurture Your Inner Child

Every grown-up has an inner child who deserves to be loved. However, you may have not been raised in a family where this sensitive soul was seen or supported. Instead, your inner child might have been shamed for being "weak," a "sissy," or a "cry baby." This is wounding enough for girls, but it's especially brutal for boys who may get bullied and rejected by more macho kids.

By the time you're an adult, your wounded inner child could have retreated so far within, you may have forgotten about it. Nevertheless, their pain is still alive--even if you're not conscious of it--and can wreak havoc in your relationships. This can manifest as fear of intimacy and a reluctance to set boundaries or be your authentic self.

Also, begin to recognize when your inner child is in jeopardy. The tip offs? Perhaps you're laughing less, feeling overtired or overworked. Once, during a crazily hectic book tour, I dreamed I saw an infant in a crib turning blue who I couldn't care for because I had a magazine interview! From hard knocks I've learned to nurture my inner child, particularly during periods when I'm overburdened. Small things like giggling with a friend or streaming a funny video go a long way.

Reclaiming your inner child is crucial. Here's how to revitalize, nurture, and protect that vibrant, sensitive part of yourself. Visualize your childhood home where your inner child was not seen or cared for. Then, extend an invitation to this darling girl or boy to re-emerge. Acknowledge, "I'm sorry you were hurt. I know how painful that felt. But now, I vow to protect you. I won't let anyone hurt you again." Then, bring that sweet child home with you where he or she can become the amazing, creative being that Spirit intended.

Tears Can Be Healing

Tears are your body's release valve for stress, sadness, grief, anxiety, and pain. You also have tears of joy, say when a child is born or tears of relief when a difficulty has passed. In my life, I am grateful when I can cry. I wish I could do it more. It feels cleansing, a way to purge pent up emotions so they don't lodge in my body as stress symptoms such as fatigue or pain. To stay healthy and release stress, I encourage my patients to cry. For both men and women, tears are a sign of courage, strength, and authenticity.

Crying makes us feel better, even when a problem persists. Along with physical detoxification, emotional tears heal our broken hearts. You don't want to hold tears back. Patients sometimes say, "Please excuse me for crying. I was trying hard not to because it makes me feel weak." I know where that sentiment comes from: parents who were uneasy around tears, a society that tells us we're weak for crying--in particular that "real men don't cry." Also, we may have the sense that it's too painful to cry, that floodgates of anguish might open that couldn't be closed. I reject these notions. The new enlightened paradigm of what constitutes a powerful man and woman is someone who has the strength and self-awareness to cry--and if necessary the willingness to seek support to deal with feelings that may seem overwhelming. These are the people who impress me, not those who put up some macho front of faux-bravado.

Try to let go of clichéd conceptions about crying. It is good to cry. It is healthy to cry. This helps you to emotionally clear sadness and stress. The point isn't to get consumed by emotional pain but to resolve it. Crying is necessary to work through grief. When waves of tears periodically come over us after we

experience a loss, they are helping us process the loss so we can keep living with open hearts. Otherwise, we are leaving ourselves open to depression, bitterness, or physical symptoms (emotional pain can morph into disease in our bodies) if we suppress these potent feelings. When a friend apologized for curling up in the fetal position on my floor, weeping, depressed over a failing romance, I told her, "Your tears blessed my floor. There is nothing to apologize for." Thank God our bodies have this capacity to cry.

Set an intention now to see your tears as an expression of your inner strength and authenticity so that they can purify any suffering and negativity.

Develop Self-Empathy

The following four steps from my book, **The Genius of Empathy**, demonstrate how to bring self-empathy into your daily life. They will help you re-program unproductive thoughts, elevate your self-talk, and awaken the healing energy of the heart.

Tip 1. Address Yourself with Kindness

Get in the habit of addressing yourself in a caring, positive tone. The language you use with yourself is important.

Tip 2. Connect to Your Heart

Put your hand over your heart to activate unconditional love and empathy or simply visualize this area and feel the love build. You can also breathe this healing energy directly into an uncomfortable part of your body.

Tip 3. Make a General Empathic Statement to Yourself

In stressful situations, you can always say to yourself simple words of comfort to begin the healing process, such as, "I'm sorry you have to go through this; hang in there" or "I can see that you're hurting, we will be okay."

Tip 4. Make a Specific Empathic Statement to Yourself

First, identify the difficult situation. Then empathize with your feelings about it and also affirm an inner strength such as: "I know that I am resilient."

Chapter 2 – The Secret to Empathic Listening



Empathic listening is a way to help heal others through the quality of your presence and attention. You consciously give your time, focus, and compassion to someone who needs to be heard. You slow down to be fully in the moment without distractions. No checking messages, being on the internet, watching television, scanning the room, or taking calls. You are quiet. You are attuning. You are present.

As a psychiatrist, I'm a trained listener. When patients consult me, I'm able to listen to them on a deeper level by utilizing my intellect, my intuition, and empathic abilities. This is very gratifying to me as it gives me the opportunity to understand what they are experiencing on a deeper level. To empower my empath patients, I teach them to listen to their inner voice and set boundaries with difficult people so their empathy can be a source of strength, love, and vitality rather than "dis-ease."

Empathic listening is very different from talking. It is a quiet, non-verbal exercise in cultivating presence and showing undivided attention. This is also known as "passive listening," which is different from "active listening" where you ask questions and discuss what the person shared.

Are You a Good Empathic Listener? Quiz

Take this quiz to determine your level of empathic listening when a friend, co-worker or family member is sharing their feelings with you. Answer “Yes” or “No” to the following questions.

When someone is sharing their feelings do you:

1. Allow the person to do most of the talking?
2. Use a caring tone of voice when responding?
3. Connect to the person with respect and acceptance?
4. Make gentle eye contact?
5. Keep judgements to yourself?
6. Refrain from giving unsolicited advice?
7. Stop yourself from trying to fix someone?
8. Listen from a place of loving detachment to protect yourself from absorbing their stress?
9. Refrain from sharing your own similar experiences?
10. Stay focused without fidgeting or checking your phone?

Calculate Your Results:

- If you answered “yes” to 9 to 10 questions then you have high empathic listening skills.
- If you answered “yes” to 7 to 8 questions then you have good empathic listening skills.
- If you answered “yes” to 4 to 6 questions then you have moderate empathic listening skills.
- If you answered “yes” to 0 to 3 questions then you have low empathic listening skills, but you can easily improve them.

Keys to Empathic Listening

Here is an overview of the main points to practice empathic listening. (Much more in **The Genius of Empathy**.)

1. Stay Neutral, Bear Witness

As a listener, you bear witness to another's distress. You are caring, while offering a few supportive smiles, nods, or words.

2. Cultivate Acceptance

Try to be tolerant of ideas that may be different from your own, that you haven't been exposed to before, or reasoning that makes you uncomfortable.

3. Set a Time, Place, and Time Limit

Keep in mind that you don't have to listen to everyone in need, (as many caring people tend to do). Choose who you listen to and for how long.

4. Stick to One Topic

Agreeing on a topic keeps you focused. If a sharer tries to cover a list of problems, it can be unproductive and overwhelming for both of you.

5. Listen to Your Intuition

Listening to your intuition can help you determine a person's inner state. It is a nonverbal way of being empathic.

6. Bring the Conversation to a Close

When you're nearing the end of the agreed upon listening time, you can gently remind the sharer that it is almost time to stop.

HOLDING SPACE

One of the great challenges for empaths and all sensitive people is how to help others without burning out. Many sensitives try too hard to fix or help others and then find themselves exhausted by the effort. The art of holding space is a skill that empaths must learn. Holding space means that you are present for people you love by radiating caring, nonjudgmental, and calm energy—but you don't try to fix them or absorb their distress.

Holding space is a loving-kindness practice that you can use when you are supporting others. It's more about "being" than "doing." Your energy and attitude can make all the difference.

When you're with someone you care about who is going through a hard time or is expressing joy, it is a beautiful skill to hold space for them. This means that you choose to be totally present with that person. (Holding space is not something you offer everyone in need.) Your mind is still. You're not overly involved. You're not thinking about how to change or fix them. You're not focused on your own emotions, which may be getting triggered. Instead, you look at them with love, listen with your heart, and hold a positive, nonjudgmental space for this person to just be.

Holding space is a gift. I often offer this to my patients and friends. You're creating an aura of love which extends from you to them. Never underestimate the power of holding space for someone. It can be a vehicle for deep healing for you and the person in need.

Chapter 3 - How to Empathize Without Burning Out



Showing empathy for others is a powerful form of giving. But many empathic and sensitive souls often wonder, “How can I give empathy to others without burning out? How can I be compassionate without absorbing other people’s stress?”

Are You a Healthy Giver? Quiz

To determine your level of empathic giving answer “yes” or “no” to the following questions:

1. Can you empathize with someone without feeling drained?
2. Do you practice random acts of kindness on a regular basis?
3. Are you able to set healthy boundaries such as saying a positive no?
4. Do you prioritize your giving with self-care, rest, and alone time?
5. Do you feel nourished by giving?
6. Do you know your limit on how much time and energy you can give someone?
7. Do you accept support and help?
8. Can you delegate responsibilities?
9. Do you allow others the dignity of their own path without interfering?

Calculate Your Results:

- If you answered “yes” to 8 to 9 questions congratulations you are a healthy giver.
- If you answered “yes” to 6 to 7 questions then you have a good start to being a healthy giver.
- If you answered “yes” to 4 to 5 questions then you tend to give too much.
- If you answered “yes” to 0 to 3 questions then you give too much and can be susceptible to burning out, but you can easily change that.

To be of service you don't have to give 100 percent or more to everyone in need. At times, it's okay not to be so available. To stay centered sometimes you need to leave the mundane world for a while by taking a break from daily responsibilities to practice self-care. Give yourself that gift. When being of service, consider each situation individually. Always factor in your own energy level and physical and emotional limitations to assess- how much you have to give.

Here are four strategies from **The Genius of Empathy** on how to avoid empathy overload.

1. Be Mindful of How Much You Are Giving

Appreciate the power of offering small gifts: a hug, a flower, a fresh salad, a birthday card, three minutes of your time instead of an afternoon. Train yourself to be a high-quality giver in smaller increments when possible.

2. Set Guilt-Free and Compassionate Limits

If you feel you should say yes to every request, practice setting limits. Changing your behavior and taking action despite your fears and reservations, can precede an attitude shift. You don't need to be guilt-free to set limits.

3. Protect Your Energy with a Shielding Technique

When you're listening to someone who is in emotional or physical pain, picture a shield of white or pink light completely surrounding your body about five inches above your skin to protect your energy. It keeps out all negativity and stress but allows in positivity. Maintain this shield for as long as necessary when you're in draining situations.

4. Cord Cutting Technique

If you feel you are too connected with someone's physical or emotional state, visualize a cord of light extending from your belly to theirs. Then lovingly set your intention to cut the cord with their pain or discomfort--you're not severing the connection with the total person. Next, visualize taking a pair of scissors and cutting the cord between you and the aspect of the person you want distance from. This is a technique my patient, Terry used to separate herself from her mother's anxiety yet still maintain a loving bond with her.

Set Healthy Boundaries

The downside of being so compassionate is that people flock to you asking for help and sharing their woes. Since I was a child, it was as if I wore an invisible sign saying, "I can help you." That's why empaths and sensitive people must set clear boundaries with others and not "over-give."

Boundaries protect you and help you feel safe, but it takes practice. Without them, you might start resenting a behavior that annoys you about the other person, or you might get exhausted from giving too much. Set healthy boundaries with kindness, without being confrontational. Remember "No" is a complete sentence. Also, empaths must learn to assert boundaries with victims and be careful not to turn into a codependent or their therapist.

Codependent Giving

There's a joke that when a codependent dies, it is your life that passes in front of their eyes. Codependents feel overly responsible for people and pick up the slack in relationships and work. If you're a codependent, it can be hard to pull back and let others travel their own paths. You may want to over-help or fix people, believing that if you don't intervene something terrible will happen, a habit you might have learned from living with an alcoholic or anxious parent.

Empaths can have codependent tendencies but not all codependents are empaths. The difference is that empaths absorb the stress, emotions, and physical symptoms of others, something not all codependents do.

As a highly empathic person, practice protection techniques such as shielding and meditation to deal with the energy absorption issue, which isn't as relevant for a pure codependent. However, for both empaths and codependents, setting boundaries and seeing others as separate, not simply an extension of themselves, is also part of healing. You are still present, but you can be a great listener and a loyal friend without taking on someone's problems.

Set an intention to stop obsessing about others and focus on your own self-care. You can be a giving person while maintaining healthy boundaries.

Chapter 4: Empathizing With Others Even When It's Difficult



You have a choice about how you approach people. In this amazing corner of space in which humans live, relationships are central to your well-being, but they also present you with the most challenges. Though you may not care for someone's personality, or your values conflict with theirs, you can still treat them with a basic sense of *namaste* to convey the feeling: Despite our differences, I respect the spirit within you.

Why is showing empathy so important? Because you want happy or at least mutually respectful relationships. Because you are choosing compassion and tolerance over drama, ego, or resentment. Because you want to understand those you care about so you don't wound, alienate, or lose these dear ones.

Empathy's role is to nourish and repair relationships rather than rupturing them. It's all too easy to damage a friendship or a marriage. Stop listening or attempting to empathize, keep arguing, attacking, and shaming them and sooner or later, your relationship will either end or turn into a wound-mate relationship, which is based on hurting each other. Tending to the cherished people in your life is like tending to a garden. You must support the health of each relationship in this basic way. Finding empathy brings healing into your relationships and helps mend the hurt you might have caused each other.

The Laws of Conscious Speech

Conscious speech means relating to others with compassion, (flaws and all). This applies especially during arguments or when relationships are strained. Truth is, people can be annoying and disappointing, as we all are sometimes. None of us is perfect; most of us are doing the best we can. So, keep searching for a part of someone that you can empathize with, even when it's a stretch. You may not always succeed, but keep trying. This doesn't make you a doormat or a victim. Rather, such compassion allows you to become the finest version of yourself, even as you set limits with bad behavior.

I suggest that you follow some general laws of communication so you're able to flow with difficult people and prevent blocks. In your daily life, these will ensure that you're leading from a position of strength not anger or desperation. You'll be flexible instead of just meeting conflict with an oppositional force. I adhere to these laws so I can treat people with an attitude I'm proud of, instead of shrinking into the smallest parts of myself. Be aware that your ego will no doubt resist these laws since the aim is to create open channels of communication between people rather than stonewalling or defending, responses the ego is more accustomed to. These laws value "we" as well as "me," a necessary consideration when tuning into flow.

Ego is not all bad. It gives us a healthy sense of self and a useful sense of determination. There's a role for it, but just not here. Don't let your ego interfere with making breakthroughs in communication that aren't possible when it's in charge. As you think about your relationships, I'd like you to begin considering "What beliefs or behavior would be useful to surrender? Where do I cling to ego or the desire to control?" Since we all need reminders, I suggest that you post a copy of the laws below on your refrigerator, in your office, anywhere else that can offer a visual prompt. In particular, get into the habit of applying these laws when showing empathy with someone you don't like.

When empathizing with someone always connect to the best in people, to their intelligence, integrity, or intuition. This will bring out the best in you, too. The worst in us is just raring to emerge, but don't go for it. Refrain from getting curt, condescending, or mean; it'll backfire.

The Laws of Impeccable Communication

Do

1. Be calm, not emotionally reactive.
2. Avoid defensiveness--it makes you look weak.
3. Patiently hear someone out without interrupting or needing to have the last word.
4. Empathize with where people are coming from, even if you disagree with them. Ask yourself: What pain or shortcoming is causing someone to act so angrily, to behave in a manner that doesn't meet my needs? Take some quiet moments to intuitively sense where the person's heart is hurting or closed. Then compassion will come more easily.
5. Pick your battles, apologize when necessary.

Don't

1. Be drawn into drama.
2. React impulsively out of anxiety or anger so you say something you'll regret.
3. Hold onto resentments or stay attached to being right.
4. Attempt to manage other people's lives or become their therapist.
5. Shame people, especially in front of others.

Get in the habit of applying these laws to both friends and foes. The "dos" involve surrender and discernment. They will move you closer to resolving conflict by first harmonizing with another's position, even if you disagree or dislike them. This sets a tone to resolve conflicts or set boundaries whereas antagonism just alienates.

Respond, Don't React or Attack

This empathic practice may go against every reactionary instinct you have just to blow up, to accuse, or to judge someone. The gift of not lashing out is that it spares you and others the harmful emotional fallout.

Even if you don't have control over your first thought, you do have control over your second one. For instance, when you're responding to a relative who says, "You've caused all the problems in our family," your neurochemicals go into flight, flight, or freeze mode.

Here are four strategies on how to counter the adrenaline rush surging through your system.

1. Use positive self-talk. Tell yourself, I can handle this. I do not have to get back at this person with anger and blame.
2. Take a few deep breaths. Slowly inhaling and exhaling is centering and releases stress.
3. Hold a "worry stone." These are oval-shaped polished gemstones with a thumb-sized indentation. They are used for relaxation and relief of anxiety. Rubbing them in a stressful situation can be self-soothing.
4. Practice the sacred pause. Count to ten or take a time out. Do not send any emails or texts or make a call until you are less upset. Sometimes, to break the "react and attack" cycle, physically separate until you both are calmer.

Like many people, perhaps you instinctively attack when you're triggered. Your temper flares from zero to a thousand in a split second. You're hurt. You're furious. But the intention is to empathize with someone, even if you don't like them. Instead of attacking, acknowledge "I hear you." This gives you a better chance of reaching the person, and minimizing drama.

Follow the No Fixing Rule

It's a sign of respect to accept people for who they are. It feels terrible to be judged. Reflect on how you've reacted when a friend or loved one judges you. Unless someone asks you for help, it's generally better to back off or just offer a suggestion once. Except under dire circumstances, have faith that the person can handle the situation in their own way.

Naturally, you do what you can to assist loved ones. But there comes a point when they must do the work themselves. I know it is frustrating and painful to see someone you care about struggling. But getting caught in their frustration or offering unasked for suggestions is counterproductive for them and draining for you. To tolerate being in intimate relationships, you have to sometimes step back. Will the other person ever resolve the problem? You must live with that uncertainty. But always hold good thoughts and prayers for them while giving them space. In addition, a mantra I find helpful is: "I am not responsible." As you repeat this, you will feel your need to rescue others lift.

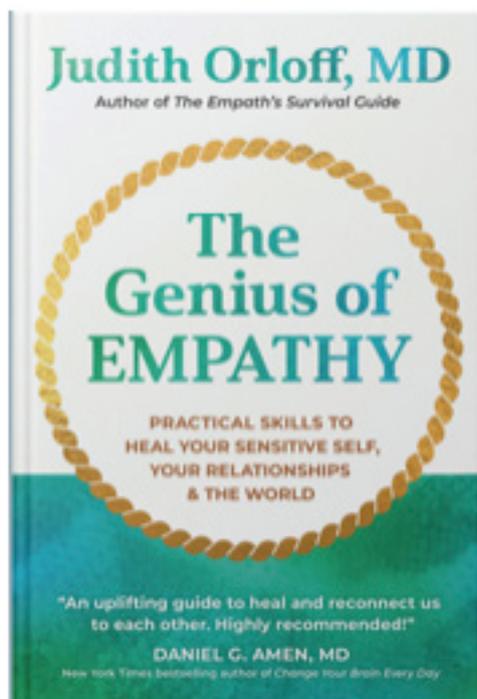
Imagine what kind of relationship you would have with a family member or friend if it were based on supporting their own strengths rather than fixing them. Like many sensitive people, you may believe that if you stop trying to "improve" others, the relationship will disappear, or the person will fall apart. The opposite is usually true. When a relationship exists between equals relating to each other, it can thrive. Focusing on someone's strengths, especially in the midst of their struggles, gives them a chance to discover their wings.

Set an intention to practice acceptance rather than seeing it as your mission to improve others. When empathizing with others focus on their gifts, rather than their shortcomings.

Conclusion

I hope this ebook inspires you to think about empathy from a new perspective and that these tools help you to be tender and kind to yourself and others. Everyday empathy matters. It will bring us closer and it lets us know that we are not alone. Take good care of yourself and each other. Try not to make things too complicated. Ultimately, it all really comes down to love.

The Genius of Empathy: Practical Skills to Heal Your Sensitive Self, Your Relationships and the World



This ebook is a sample of the practical skills in [The Genius of Empathy](#), which teaches you how to tap into your empathic superpowers.

Empathy is so much more than feeling deeply—it holds transformative power to heal ourselves, strengthen our relationships, and amplify our purpose. Dr. Judith Orloff, known for landmark works like [The Empath's Survival Guide](#), introduces empathy as a daily healing practice and form of emotional intelligence. It is not only for highly sensitive people but for all deep feelers and those who want to develop empathy as a new skill.

Drawing on insights from neuroscience, psychology, and energy medicine, Dr. Orloff shows us how to access our sensitivities, soothe our nervous system, and stop absorbing the emotions of others. She begins with the magic of empathy to find greater self-love and healing—including from trauma. Subsequent chapters apply empathy to our relationships, communities, and the world. Exploring each chapter's practices, you'll learn the art of empathic

listening, how to stop overthinking, and the importance of setting healthy boundaries and loving detachment to prevent overwhelm, burnout, and more.

Through inspiring real-life stories and relatable examples, the book illustrates the life-changing potential of empathy, showing readers how it can create a positive ripple effect in their lives and communities.

This practical, action-driven guide helps us connect our minds and hearts to embody our most authentic, fierce, and compassionate selves. “Cultivating empathy is a kind of peaceful warrior training,” says Dr. Orloff. “You will learn to be both strong and loving, neither a pushover nor rigid. Wherever you are in your life, this book can meet you there and lift you higher.”

The Genius of Empathy is available on [Amazon US](#), [Amazon Canada](#), [Amazon UK](#) and [B&N](#) More inspiration and information at www.DrJudithOrloff.com

Praise for The Genius of Empathy

“This book offers practical advice on how to cultivate and enhance empathy, which I believe readers will find of great value.”

— The Dalai Lama, from the foreword to **The Genius of Empathy**

This book is needed now more than ever—our world’s empathy deficit has robbed so many people of their health and happiness. I highly recommend it.”

—Daniel G. Amen, MD, New York Times best-selling author of *Change Your Brain Every Day*

“Dr. Judith Orloff has given us a brilliant book which explores the genius and power of empathy. A stunning contribution to our collective healing.”

—Caroline Myss, New York Times best-selling author of *Anatomy of the Spirit*

Resources

Judith Orloff, MD, [**The Genius of Empathy: Practical Skills to Heal Your Sensitive Self, Your Relationships and the World**](#) – A practical, action-driven guide that helps us connect our minds and hearts to embody our most authentic, fierce, and compassionate selves. (Sounds True 2024)

Judith Orloff, MD, [**The Empath's Survival Guide: Life Strategies for Sensitive People**](#) – A practical and empowering book for everyone who wants to develop their sensitivities and empathy to become more caring people in an often insensitive world. (Sounds True 2017)

Judith Orloff, MD, [**Thriving as an Empath: 365 Days of Self-Care for Sensitive People**](#) – This book offers 365 days of self-care meditations, reflections, and journaling topics as daily inoculations against stress and overwhelm. (Sounds True 2019)

Judith Orloff, MD, [**Emotional Freedom: Liberate Yourself from Negative Emotions and Transform Your Life**](#) – This is a road map for those who are stressed out, discouraged, or overwhelmed as well as for those who are in a good emotional place but want to feel even better. (Harmony Publishing 2010)

Judith Orloff MD, [**Second Sight: An Intuitive Psychiatrist Tells Her Extraordinary Story and Shows You How to Tap Your Own Inner Wisdom**](#) (Harmony Publishing) – In this moving personal story Dr. Orloff recounts her “journey to become whole” by first accepting and then embracing her intuitive abilities.

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