Navigate Menopause With Empathy Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Welcome and Introduction to Dr. Judith Orloff

Hello, ladies. Welcome back to Mastering The Meno(Pause) Transition 3.0, our third year at it. I'm your host, Dr. Sharon Stills. And I am, as always, happy to be here.

It's an honor and a privilege to share these conversations with you all and help you on your hormonal journey. And you know, we have a wide range of conversations, from physiology to energetics.

And today we have one of those good girl friend talks, you know, so grab your blankie if it's chilly where you are, go grab a cup of tea, get comfortable, tell everyone to leave you alone because as always, I promise to go get the best speakers.

And I have to say I am like, really excited to be interviewing my guest today because she's someone who. I have followed her work for a long time, and I am the first time I'm getting to interview herself.

I'm just as excited as all of you, and you may recognize her. My guest is Dr. Judith Orloff. She has a brand new book out called The Genius of Empathy with a Foreword by the Dalai Lama. And.

She's a New York Times bestselling author, UCLA clinical faculty member. I mean, she is the real deal. And she is going to talk to us about some of the most important things on your healing journey.

I say this over and over, and I just like to drill it into everyone's heads. You know, patients come to me and they want to know what hormone to take and what supplements to take.

And should they eat salmon or should they eat beef, or how should they move their body? And of course, all these things are important. But if we don't deal with our own emotions, if we don't look at our own inner child and our own relationship to ourself and others will never truly heal and get to the most amazing places that we can get to in this lifetime.

And so that's why I was like over the moon when Dr. Orloff said she would come and speak to you all and share about her new book. So welcome to the summit.

I am so excited to have you here. So thank you. I'm excited to be here. Yeah. So your new book, The Genius of Empathy, I, I love that title. And I know you've done a lot of work around empathy over the years, and I'm just curious, did you choose Empathy?

Did Empathy choose you? How did you get into this line of work? Because you're a psychiatrist? No, no, no, I think it's both. And I chose Empathy. I didn't choose empathy in the beginning, though.

I thought it and I thought being an empath and I was, you know, told I'm overly sensitive as a little girl and that I should develop a thicker skin and know what was wrong with me.

What Empathy Means and Why It Matters

So I grew up with a lot of shame about my empathy as an empath, somebody who's very, very open to reality and tends to take things on, too much, as well as the positive things that that impact Empathic on the joy, the compassion, the connection, the nature, all that.

You get that, but you also and so you learn how to set boundaries, which we'll talk about. I think, you tend to become an emotional sponge for the world and especially during menopause, you don't want to do that.

Yeah. I always say menopause. I always emphasize the pause because I do think that a lot of women up until this time, they haven't been setting boundaries and they've been everything to everyone.

And so when we pause it's like this opportunity to go wait, I can like I can set new boundaries, I can redo things and walk into this next stage of my life in a different situation with different boundaries and different, you know, holding myself accountable to different ideals.

So, what what does that look like to you? I mean, maybe first you could actually define, you know, what is your definition of empathy? And to be an empath, because I'm sure a lot of women listening can relate.

Yeah. Well, being an Empath, well, empathy is the ability to feel what it's like being in someone else's shoes and being able to resonate with them and feel where they're coming from.

being an empath is that you feel all that, but you might tend to be an emotional sponge, and you don't have the same filters that other people have. Or maybe you're going through menopause and suddenly you don't have the filters.

Maybe the hormonal changes triggered that, that you're an empath and menopause. Now I've seen that happen. and so you have to learn how to deal with this openness and this ability to connect.

by setting boundaries and by practicing self-care and maybe looking at yourself a little bit differently if you awaken as an empath during menopause, you have to change your life.

you have to change your lifestyle in order to honor this beautiful thing called empathy or ability. My ability to feel what feel for you and your ability to feel for me.

And it's a higher form of communication, you know, rather than than just, fighting with people, which never works. do you think everyone innately is born as an empath or are there different degrees, or is it something you have to really cultivate?

no, definitely not everyone who is born as an empath. I wish. Know. empath. the reason I'm so interested in empaths and helping women and men, awakened to their empathic abilities is because I think it's a way of finding a deep form of connection with each other, in our lives and our relationships, with our bodies.

And to be able to really feel what's going on, you know, with ourselves and, and honor that energetically with other people. But I, you know, like, not everyone is an empath.

And, you know, my partner, for instance, who I adore and we've been together for 11 years is not an empath. And I wouldn't want him to be an empath. It would be too much for me to have to impress.

I like having somebody solid who's not thinking about what I think all the time in terms of all the nuances of what I feel. So imposter. No, feel a lot.

And if you are feeling a lot, and maybe you want to feel a little less, that's possible to, you know, by learning strategies to deal with and just know that it's not your job to fix anybody, you know, it's not your job.

I think women wear themselves out trying to be everything to everybody and going around trying to fix their daughter and their their husband and their sisters.

And, you know, it's just exhausting. And so I think the basic realization for the The Genius of Empathy, why I use the word genius, was that you have to realize what doesn't work with empathy and how it's not your job to be a people pleaser or a peacemaker or a martyr, or getting in other people's business when it really is it your business.

Boundaries, Self-Care, and Saying No

Just let the people grow and do what they need to do sometimes. So it's a different way of, dealing with people and yourself. Yeah, I, I, I'm like, oh, I'm like the proverbial Jewish mother.

I'm like like, you know, always. Are we trying to fix everyone and putting in and feeling everything? And it is it's a lot. So I'm curious to learn like and I'm sure a lot of women listening are like, oh yeah, that's me.

That's me. Check check check. So what are some strategies for having better boundaries for for getting into the genius part of the empathy, rather the part that's draining you.

Yes. learning to practice self-care and learning how to say no when you're unable to do something. that's a good beginning. Yes. No is a complete sentence.

and it doesn't require any kind of explanation. when you're feeling like, for instance, you know, if you make a date with a friend and you're going out, you know, to a film or something, and the day comes and you're just exhausted or you don't feel well, you don't want to go anyways.

You want to be able to say to your friend, you know, I love you and was so looking forward to it. And I think I really need to stay home tonight and take care of myself.

You know, that's self-care. And you say it in a really nice way with your friend, and she's going to feel just he, he or she is going to feel disappointed.

But empaths, need to learn to tolerate that because they have to grow up, you know, and mature and move. Sometimes you're going to disappoint people and it's not the end of the world.

so. Where does your your inner child play into all this? for becoming a people pleaser, not learning how to say no. Yeah. So, the inner child, I could go on forever about the inner child.

It plays such a big role, and I've written so much about going and finding your inner child. If your inner wanting to heal, and you're wanting to be whole and integrate you can't do it without your inner child.

But you can't let your inner child rule you either, because it will be chaos. You don't want that. But there's a, meditation that I have in the book where I ask you to go back to the house where the inner child was last seen, where the inner child went through the torment or the the abuse or the neglect.

Whatever the inner child went through, you have to go back to the actual house in your mind and knock, knock, knock on the door. Open the door and see who answers it.

And if it's not her, you have to go in there and find her for him and take her hand and tell her I'm so sorry you were hurt. I'm so sorry I couldn't protect you.

And I'm going to take you home with me, and it'll never happen again. And I'm going to protect you. The rest of, you know, our time together. So you have to reintegrate that into your being.

And as an empath and somebody who wants to develop empathy, it's going to feel good now. It's going to feel like this is I. I've been missing her. No, I've been missing her so much.

And she's back. And I claimed her most importantly.

Inner Child Healing and Self-Empathy

yeah, I find that until we really work on the inner child, the healing isn't possible because we all, I think most of us, right, have that dysfunction from childhood and things we learned how to, you know, how to survive in our environment that don't serve us as an adult.

Yeah. So that's that's exactly it. And so part of the journey, and the genius of the journey is finding her again. And now I've worked with patients. It's been interesting where they don't want to find their inner child.

You know, they're not ready now. Some of them not not all of them, but I think I have one in particular. And it took a year, really, until she came to me and says, you know, I think I'm ready to do it now.

As she called her inner child a crybaby and had no empathy whatsoever for her. And she looked at the inner child as a reason that some the force that was pulling her back from being the success she could be.

And, so she was fighting with herself, basically, rather than having empathy with everything the child has been through. You know, as most children are, a lot of children don't have ideal childhoods, you know, and there's a lot to deal with.

And so that empathy for that part of yourself and what she's been through and apologizing to her for not being able to protect her as you were a child, you couldn't, you know, how could you?

You were not in a position to do. And so it's not an issue where you beat yourself up. It's an issue where you have empathy for yourself. And there's a chapter in the book on self empathy.

And I think maybe it's one of the more important chapters in learning how to have empathy with what you've been through it. It's hard being here on Earth. It's hard.

A lot of the changes that people go through, we all go through, you know, and so having empathy with yourself, what that does is that that triggers the immune response and it triggers all the good hormones that make you feel good hormones in yourself.

When you have empathy, as opposed to beating yourself up, putting yourself down where, all of the stress hormones start raging and you do damage to your body and your soul.

Yeah. And it's such an important thing. What you're talking about is some of the most key, important part of being human and being in a body. And at this point in this menopausal journey where you know, if you were raising children, they tend to be, you know, they're out of the house and maybe you're looking towards retirement or a new career and you're doing something as a second career.

And, you know, so it's like this opportunity and we we talk about all these things, but we don't really talk as a society about what you're talking about, that we have to really go and look at our own journey and our own experience and kind of spend some time.

It's a lot of times we say, I know I don't have time to do this, but it is. I can't think of any better thing to invest our time in than to going back, collecting the pieces of ourself that need love and attention and healing and really gathering all that so that we can now live this next part of our journey wiser and and happier and healthier.

And it's really hard to do that if we have this subconscious areas pulling at us that we haven't dealt with. My come up as a woman go through hormonal changes.

That's a big thing. You know, as the estrogen goes down, you know, and the hormones, shift around, the testosterone goes down. It's a different world.

You know, you have to kind of reorient yourself to what that world is and make some choices based on empathy about how you want to deal with this new world.

And so it's very important that empathy be your motto as you traverse this journey. And you're such a good role model, you're exuding joy, you know, and you're so present in your body.

And it's about having self empathy with your body as it goes through that changes whatever choices you decide,

whatever path you decide to go down with menopause, to feel really good about it for yourself.

And it's very important in this stage of your life that you have empathy for yourself and don't beat yourself up. That's in the mind. Those are the old habits.

And if you notice, you say, know not so nice things to yourself. Take a breath. Really make a decision not to promote those voices anymore because they're not true.

None of that is true. there's really anything I want to get across. I hope that gets across to everyone listening it. Their faults, their lies. It would never true that you are overly sensitive or that you needed to change your sensitivity is your great gift.

Your empathy is your great gift. That's what you want to develop. It is shut up. So what? What? I'm curious, what is the difference between empathy and compassion?

Are they the same thing or are they different? Are people these days make some distinctions? And the Dalai Lama, I'm honored that he wrote the foreword to this book.

And he in the foreword, he writes but one paragraph on compassion and paragraph on empathy.

Tears, Emotional Release, and Listening to the Body

So there is a bit of a difference, but usually how it's defined as empathy is I feel what's going on inside of you and I send you my best and compassion is is that maybe.

But it's also clicking into action and saying, you're not eating. I'm going to go shopping for you. I'm going to get you this wonderful food and know that's compassion and action.

Empathy is more feeling, just a feeling state. But empathy can kick off compassion. So they're all, you know, married to one another. And so you read something on the little form you filled out for me and it said the healing power of tears.

And I would like to have you explain what you mean by that, because I think we are so taught in our society. You know, in my practice, I, I feel like when someone comes in for an initial appointment and they cry, then I'm doing my job, but they always end up saying, I know, you know, someone cries and they say, oh my God, I'm so sorry.

Like, we're always apologizing. I'm like, you don't have to. So could you talk a little bit? I love that you wrote that. And I was like, I think that's an area that needs more attention.

But I think especially as the body goes through the menopausal changes, one of the reaction just tears and tears and tears. No. And it's important to have empathy for your tears.

The tears are a healing mechanism in the body. All right? They're there to heal you. And so they give off, many, many positive things in their substance to help you.

So you don't want to shut them off. But then again, you know, my patients sometimes, you know, bemoan the fact that feel like they can't stop crying. And that's not a comfortable kind of crying where it just goes on and on.

You can't stop. It's too much. And so, you know, that might require something a little different. But in terms of letting yourself feel tears of happiness or feel tears of sadness, it's important that we we grieve.

You know, there's so much to grieve every day. You know, really, if you look at the news. But it's also important not to get overcome by, you know, just a rush of tears all the time because, you know, you would have every right to cry the rest of your life over what's happening in the world.

You know, want to you want to lead a life. You want to have empathy for your own tears. And if you don't feel ready, let's say, you know, some people say, I don't want to cry, I want to do it fine.

But that's don't do it then. But if ever you are ready, it could bring you great relief. I could not imagine not crying, you know, and building up all that tension myself.

No crying. Just, it allows you to have a big deep breath and exhale and just. Oh, turn it over. Surrender. You know, tears help you to surrender. And some people say, well, why do I want to do that?

Is that just defeat? No. Absolutely not. Not in that sense it isn't. It's honoring your body's needs and messages. And I want to point out your body. Here's everything you say about it. Now.

I want well, you can't. If you say bad things about it, it's going to hear you, and it's not going to feel good. It's, you know, like anything else. And no, it won't help you heal.

You have to say good things to it and and try to mean it, or at least in the beginning, act as if, which is fine. Sometimes that's a good beginning to, But your body is your, you know, it houses your temple and and it's the temple that the houses the spirit.

And so it's all connected. And so you want to be embodied first of all. And maybe you haven't been embodied all your life has. You've been so busy with work and running around with family, you haven't had time to really settle in, to be embodied in the joy and the health and well-being that could come from that.

But as you go through menopause, it's I really invite you to use it. And as you say, you know, an opportunity for your journey and a way to listen to your bodily functions that menopause brings you into your body more, you know, and, it's a perfect opportunity to show empathy to yourself and not overdo things and not over give.

There's a chapter in the book on over giving and unhealthy giving and going through the menopausal change. You really have to read this because you do not want to be giving to everybody.

You know, when you're you don't have it because then you're going to pay the price and you have to learn how to give from the heart. And when not to give, you don't have to give all the time.

Empathy is not giving empathy 100% of the time that you. Nobody can do that. It's to know you. You have to have empathy for what you can do and know what you can't do at the moment.

So I love that. I love that you're so focused on, you know, what I hear you saying is it's kind of that, that cliche, you know, when you're on the airplane, put your oxygen mask on before you put on your the child you're traveling with.

Empathy, Compassion, and Heart-Centered Healing

And so what I hear you saying, and I hope what everyone is hearing is that it's all about what you're doing for yourself first. Like, so if you're learning to develop empathy, it's not for out there, it's for in here.

And then when you feel that, you can then bring it out to other people. Yes, exactly. You have to start with yourself. This is where you have to prioritize yourself.

And even just putting your hand over your heart like this I do this all day long, and I do it subconsciously where something happens and suddenly my hands are here.

No, I don't think about it, but it's a coping mechanism that that I use and I love because I love opening the heart. Empathy means opening your heart.

And the heart, by the way, is the healing energy. So if you want to heal, empathy triggers the heart and then the healing energy starts flowing in your body.

And I love that more than anything. I love the. Healing energy and feeling it, but it comes from your heart. It doesn't come from your head. And so that's important to know.

And empathy in the heart or empathy triggers the heart. So that's very important to know in your journey. Yeah, I spend a lot of time, I bow my head to my heart to remember, you know, come, come from here because it's so easy to just want to come from your head.

But being here and let yourself be filled by this beautiful energy, you empathy is about going slower, not faster. urge everyone to slow down so you really can feel it now and really benefit from the healing energy of empathy, as that's how I'm presenting it in the book.

Not just as a nice thing to do, but as an actual healing energy that you're opening up in your body. And once you get it going in your body, it can help heal your relationships to those relationships without empathy, you know, I'm going to get very far.

Yeah, you don't want to be fighting with people all the time. You want to at least try and see where they're coming from. You see and know what what people want.

If you're interested in relationships and you know you want your relationships to be better, basically what people want is to be seen and to be heard.

Interview valued. Period. If you go down to the bottom of it, if you can give people that, I hear what you're saying. There's a chapter on empathic dialog.

I hear what you're saying. I'll take it under consideration. You know, I I'm you know, I love using empathy in, in mediation because when you have two parties and they're so angry and you know, at odds with another, if one gives the impression, the verbiage, I hear you and I'll take it under consideration, as opposed to your, your, beliefs are so destructive, I can't even get near you.

I can't even talk to you that you don't want to do that. Even though you might feel that you want to say, I hear what you're saying, and I'm going to give it some consideration.

that's what that does, is that opens up the possibility of you two having a different relationship than just adversary. Is there any chance of us getting along with each other?

Empathy helps tremendously with that. and so how so you walk in a room and you feel the energy. Does that mean you're an empath? it means that, Or at least you're an intuitive for you.

You can feel the energy. a lot of people with social anxiety can feel the energy, but don't interpret it that way. They don't know what they're feeling, but they're, you know, various emotions that people are giving off in the room and that triggers them.

So it makes them uncomfortable. But, feeling the energy. There's if you look at Chinese medicine and they talk about shi or prana or the vital energy going through the body, the heart energy, you can feel that inner room.

Okay? You have to be an empath to do that. You can just be sensitive. but empaths, that's one of the things they do very well. They can read the room, you know, they can feel the energy in the room and and not just in the room with people.

You can walk into houses or auditoriums or structures with no people. There are very few people there. You can feel the energy of the the place. No. So I think of that as a beautiful connection in life to be able to feel that.

So I would encourage everyone to develop that. If you if you want to. So how do you feel that but not take on the stress or the angst or the the harder emotions?

How do you how do you block that or deal with that or integrate that? Yeah. Well, the first thing you do is breathe it out. You don't hold your breath.

People, when they get scared, hold their breath. And they by doing so, they hold all that energy in their body, the stress.

Reading Energy, Relationships, and Narcissists

So the last thing you want to do is hold your breath. you want to breathe out. Let's say you feel I don't like this place that much. So if you have the option to leave, just leave it.

You know, it doesn't matter. You don't have to force yourself to stay in a place with weird energy or just simply energy you're uncomfortable with. but you have to breathe it out.

you have to ground yourself and visualize yourself coming back to your body. Tell yourself, it is not my responsibility to fix the world. and you can send the space some loving heart energy just by feeling your heart and letting it go out so you can add something good to the space, and then leaving.

yeah. So it really is about taking self-responsibility. And I love, like it. Just when you say it, I could feel the energy and I can. I can see it in your in your energy.

I can feel it. So. And it's not just you and I, everyone listening can get in this kind of resonance with each other. And it's a joy. It's it's about connecting to other people.

And I think that's what a lot of women want. There's an epidemic of loneliness out there now. I've hooked up with a narcissist all these years. You're finally getting the courage to leave them.

No, Ray. Yeah. I was just about to ask you, like when? What about relationships you're in? Because a lot of times, as we're doing the work, all of a sudden we wake up and we're like, oh.

And I remember, a therapist telling me years ago, you know, you can love them. You're just going to love them from the other side of the road now. And so how do you, you know, for women listening who are maybe struggling with children or, you know, an intimate they're their partner or their husband or wife, and you all of a sudden realize this is how how do you navigate that?

And that's a big question. Should because, I mean, there's so many variations. Let's say a woman is going through menopause and she's really uncomfortable with her body and she's anxious and she's, you know, more short than usual.

And the partner, is it used any of this? This is a change because perhaps she was a giver and over a gave and took care of everything and now change. And so I would work with that, you know, and I would help them, you know, come together during the change so they don't just see it as well.

She was never that way before. And, and, and she might say, I can't stay with him. He doesn't understand me. But yeah, they've been together all these years.

I assume he's not. If he's not a narcissist, work on it. If he's narcissist, he's not. You're not going to get anything from him any time. You do not tend to like are like narcissists, like glue to empaths.

Do they kind of like come and stick to them? Okay. Glue on. There's a chapter in the book on, narcissists, sociopaths and psychopaths. And how do I identify each of them?

So an empath is not taken in by their charm or their love bombing or all the nice things they say to you in the beginning? you have to learn how not to fall prey to their false charms.

And so I guide you through in that chapter, some of you might want to go right to the chapter on narcissists, on how to identify them. So you have to diagnose them and you can have symptoms.

You have to look for the disease. It's called Empathy deficient disorder. If you can get that empathy deficient that means they're not wired neurologically.

show empathy, which means they can't love you if they can't show empathy. Empathy is in the center of being loving. If you can't show empathy, you're crippled.

No, it's a sign of crippling to me. It's a very, sad state when somebody is a, you know, it's can't contact their empathy. However, what I'm more worried about is you, you know, the narcissists going to take care of themselves.

The impasse often need a lot of support in order to, either get out or find some kind of a balanced place in the relationship where you can accept what's going on and find your love elsewhere, you know?

But but in general, if there's a narcissist, a boss, a, spouse, anybody, you have to take that seriously. You're dealing with a really, empathy deficient person.

And so you have to deal with them differently than other people because you do a lot of damage, a lot of damage over a long period of time. And I've I've seen it over and over again.

And I always tell people, don't get involved with narcissist if you can help it, but not everyone listens to me. Okay. Well, well, I hope you are going to listen to me because I'm going to run out and read this book.

It sounds like every chapter has something a real golden nugget in it and such a value.

Where to Find the Book and Closing Remarks

And, you know, as I said at the beginning, that this is, you know, we we come to the planet, we come to have this Newman journey, the human condition.

And yes, we get to feed ourselves, right, and take our progesterone and all those things. But but the real work is in, you know, coming home to ourselves and healing ourselves.

And so what Dr. Judith has written about is, is all that juiciness, all that's about healing ourselves and what we need to know to to become okay in our hearts and with ourselves and to love ourselves.

So I please tell us where they can learn more, where they can get a copy of the book. you can get a copy of the book at any online booksellers, Amazon, Barnes and Noble.

My website, which is drjudithorloff.com. there's also an Empath support newsletter, which is for free, that you could sign up for. If you want tips and tricks about being an empath and how to function in a positive way.

and my book tour schedule is there. So if you want to meet me in person, you know, check it out. So awesome. Well, I highly recommend go get on her newsletter, read her book this.

Maybe we'll do a book club and we'll read the book together. that would be a lot of fun, so hold me to that. I would love to put that together for you all.

And, you know, really just I know we get focused on because we come from a very, you know, society and medicine teaches us in the Western world, you know, what's the pill, what's the magic bullet?

And, you know, I would like you to read this book and take this as your medicine, because this truly is the heart of medicine. So thank you so much for for the work you do in the world.

And for another amazing book. I can't wait to read it. And and just for being a part of the Summit and sharing your wisdom with all the ladies. Oh, you're so welcome.

It's an honor to be here. Thank you. All right, everyone, and tells you this will be a good one. And maybe it was a little hard to hear. And if it was hard to hear, that means you need to listen to it again.

So hit rewind, get another cup of tea and take another deep dive. And thank you for being here. And thank you for opening your hearts. And we'll be back with another talk.