



## Michele Lisenbury Christensen's Success Guru Interviews Interview with Judith Wright, author of “There Must Be More Than This”

Recorded November 2003

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**Michele:** Our guest today is Judith Wright; she is the author of *There Must Be More Than This*. Judith is here to share with us, specifically in the context of relationships and share with us as people who support couples but also for individuals, perhaps for ourselves because as you will learn about soft addictions, everyone faces them. Judith has been working with what she has coined “Soft Addictions” for over 10 years and she and her husband, Bob Wright are founders of the Wright Institute for Life Long Learning in Chicago and their league is expanding all the time. The book is published in the UK.

The notion of Soft Addictions is expanding and perhaps one day it will reach the same stretch that Soft Addictions themselves have reached. It is delightful to have you with us today, Judith. What would you like to say, by way of introducing? Perhaps people have an idea of what Soft Addictions are, but how would you describe them?

**Judith:** Soft Addictions are those seemingly harmless habits like, over shopping, watching too much TV, over snacking, gossiping, procrastinating, too much clutter, over collecting – normal everyday activities that we overdo and don’t realise the cost that they have. They are robbing us of time, they cost money, and they are total intimacy busters. They really get in the way of us connecting with ourselves and one another. They are actually keeping us from having a life with meaning and loving connection that we really deserve and desire. That’s what we are here to talk about.

**Michele:** So, it sounds like there are lots of things that are soft addictions. That list you just gave – probably most of the people listening do those things. What if they contribute to your life? How do you know it’s a soft addiction?

**Judith:** Soft addictions don’t ever contribute to your life. I think that is something we lie to ourselves about. We get in denial, justification or rationalisation. I am not saying you can’t ever watch television. You can do it in ways that does add to your life. But if you do it in the way that most of us do it - to zone out – then it always does detract from your life. Whether we want to admit it or not. I am not saying that you should never do those things; we are going to have soft addictions. It is just a matter of figuring out which ones we have and what affect they have on us and what affect they have on our relationships, and what it is that we really hunger for in life. So there is a difference.

That’s why there are all these things I listed. There could be zillions of them; from collecting gadgets, flirting too much, crossword puzzles, moods, overworking to overly speeding. You can see the wide range of behaviours and ways and beings that can become soft addictions. But what they all have in common is that we use them to avoid our feelings, we use them to numb out, we have defensiveness, rationalization and denial about them. They tend to have a compulsive feel about them – like I got to do it or don’t you dare take it away from me. We get very attached to them. Often when we try to stop or reduce them, it doesn’t really work or we do for a little bit of time and it pops back or something else replaces it. That let’s you know that it is more of an addictive process.

We also tend to hide it. We are not proud of it, we kind of minimise it or lie about it or hide the evidence like throw out the fast food wrappers really quickly. It is not things we are proud of. Those

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are some of the things that let you know you are in the realms of soft addictions. If some of those things are playing out. There maybe even more telling in how you feel or what goes on with you when you are doing these things that makes it different to things you do with passion or for true recreation and fulfilment. With soft addictions you get kind of zoned out, almost in a trance sometimes.

There was an article in Wall Street Journal about three weeks ago that talked about the “voice” that you get when you are kind of zoned out on the Internet. The voice saying: yeh, huh uh, I hear you. That’s how you know - that’s not the voice of an alive, vibrant, conscious, present person. That’s what happens with soft addictions. Or you get high, or ungrounded, or a buzz, distracted, agitated, numbed or zoned – it can have those kinds of affects on you. That is what is underneath these seemingly unrelated behaviours, when we indulge in them that way, they share a lot of these characteristics.

**Michele:** Some of these things, perhaps different things for each person are ringing bells for people. I remember I used to be chronically late and I do remember the high I got from it. Playing the game of how can I, with not enough time, still be close to on time and still get away with it. It came in clusters – I am late to start with, then I drive too fast, then I start making excuses so they all kind of come together. I have worked on that one. How do you know it is a soft addiction instead of something you enjoy? Reading could be either something that adds to your life or a soft addiction depending on those qualities you discussed.

**Judith:** That’s what is so insidious about soft addictions. It’s not that you do them, necessarily; it’s how you do them or how much you are doing them.

**Michele:** ...or how they do you!

**Judith:** ... or how you’re done in by them! (laughs)

**Michele:** Yes, what they cost you. Could you share a success story about someone who had something that you think is pretty common and what they did about it.

**Judith:** Yes, let me give you one in the context of a couple (man and woman) that I am working with. They are a gorgeous couple, mid thirties. They look like Barbie and Ken – wonderful on the outside. What they were complaining of was the decreasing intimacy; they felt like they were growing apart, their life was dull and routine. They felt like they were almost on a trajectory that was going to take them farther and farther apart and it was getting deader and deader in the relationship. They started to look at what was going on, how are they spending their time, what’s the quality of contact and what are the issues that are unresolved. A big focus was on soft addictions.

He spent a lot of time watching television and also doing projects, being in the garage, being at work late doing projects, getting consumed with projects. He is also into gadgets. There was a lot of time, money and energy focussed on those kinds of things. She was a shopper and shopped a lot. She bought, overspent but also spent time researching on the Internet, looking at catalogues, talking to people, hanging out at stores. Then they would talk about their projects. They would talk about

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decorating the house, they would talk about what they were buying and they would spend time watching television together. But they weren't getting closer; they were getting further and further apart. Not understanding that they were spending time together but they were spending mindless time together, like shopping, watching television, looking at deals, the decorating project and not talking about what really mattered.

Once they realised that these things were a big block in their lives and robbing them of time and intimacy and energy and costing a lot of money and really just feeding this superficial lifestyle they were developing, they woke up and followed some of the skills I have written about and they did training with me. She overcame her soft addictions and now television is not part of their life. They are raising their children without television. They have a television, that they play videos on but they don't tune into network television. He has dropped the gadgets thing. When she feels like shopping, then fine, but there is a money limit and she doesn't spend over this amount of money without calling him and talking it through first. Those calls have become a source of intimacy because their talking about what their values are, what matters, why do they need that, what does she think it will bring to them.

The story goes on and on. He freed up time and energy for himself. He decided to go into business himself. He became an entrepreneur in building a beautiful business. He is in sales, the quality of his sales has increased. He is more present, more grounded, more of a human being instead of a cool gadget obsessed kind of guy. He talks about things that matter, he makes great contact with people he is talking to, they want to do business with him. He is probably making two – three times as much money (he was making good money before). Their children are being raised in a family without television. They monitor these numbing activities and they have this delightful, beautiful alive family life and household of intimacy. From everything from wonderful higher purpose, to handling their family together, to great holidays to great sex – they are becoming more aware of how they are spending their time and energy and focussing on what really matters and overcoming their soft addictions.

**Michele:** It calls to mind that there are some themes. Could you discuss some of the themes of soft addictions in couples?

**Judith:** It's always a good thing to look for. I notice it in my own life (I think I might start there Michele and then talk about my own practice) In my own life I was really stuck in some ways; this is early in my life. I had a first marriage and I learnt a lot of lessons from that one. Infact it doesn't feel like I'm married now. I know what marriage can be – I call it like a long date! Now that I know, I have a 22-year relationship and marriage with the most magnificent man, with boundless, ever evolving intimacy and partnership. Something I had no idea that existed. I think I had this hunger for more in life and I couldn't quite seem to find it.

I was a great student, even as a kid, at college I got all “A”'s. I was a student leader. I would do a lot of extracurricular activities – music, creativity, dancing, editor of the yearbook. I was doing everything I could to create more value in my life – and those things helped but at the same time I was doing that I

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was watching a lot of television, biting my nails, hanging out at the mall, I was overeating, I was fat, glazing over catalogues, magazines. I felt like I was really missing something but I didn't know what it was. I worked harder and tried more diversions like watch better television, went to more movies, and went to more parties and worked harder and did better. Of course I had successes but I didn't feel satisfied. I ended up getting into a relationship with my college sweetheart and we got married and shared those things together.

I felt if I worked harder, had better distractions I'd have more success. I escalated those patterns. We went to a lot of movies, talked about a lot of surface junk, hung out, watched TV. We did those things together and I had a very empty relationship and life. It was a very numbing time – I felt like I was sleep walking in my mind. I felt dead and sad in an undefined way and empty. I kept trying things. Trying to do more things together, but nothing I was doing was working. Finally I made what I call my one decision, which is one of the skills I have learned. I decided I was going to have a life I could feel. I was going to feel myself; I was going to get into contact with myself, with my loved ones. I was going to make a difference. I was sick of sleep walking through life and I was going to change it.

At the time I had no idea how to do it, or what to do. I went about my own journey to really awaken myself and redefine my mind and that led me to having intimacy, life and consciousness and feeling and mattering and the quality of my life has shifted so dramatically through this journey. Let me relate it back and I will tell you about some of the errors I saw in my first marriage. We did not have connections, we weren't talking about what mattered, we weren't sharing our feelings, we weren't sharing dreams and aspirations, and we weren't telling the truth to each other. We were dealing with our feelings through our soft addictions. I was using my soft addictions to numb me from the reality of what was really going on in my relationship.

I was hiding out from the truth of the emptiness. I was numbing myself to try to cope with the aloneness that I was feeling in the relationship. Then I saw I was numbing myself from being aware of the problems of the relationship and I numbed myself from the awareness of his hard addictions. I was just keeping myself in denial and oblivious, using my soft addictions to almost medicate myself. With all of that, how could I have possibly had a satisfying and intimate relationship? With all that going on with me. That is one of the ways you can see in relationships, that people are using these things, like I did, to keep your awareness at bay, to not deal with problems, to deal with upsets, to try to tend to that nagging feeling that is not right.

To tend to the pain in an indirect way and all I was doing was getting emptier and emptier until I finally woke up and saw these patterns were an issue. That is when I started to understand that I did these activities when I was hungry and I needed something. I had a desire but I wasn't feeding those desires or yearnings with what I really needed. Then I went on my journey. I went into therapy at the time. I went into counselling, I interviewed people, I read everything I could in the world, I studied with spiritual teachers all over the world. I did everything I knew to do and discovered a tremendous amount of things that made a big difference. Early in my journey it became very clear that we weren't able to grow together, so I ended that relationship and continued in my journey.

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Out of that, in redefining my life I attracted my current husband, Bob into my life, who is the most magnificent, purposeful, intentional, conscious guy and we share a higher purpose together which is really where relationships start to take off. In my practice, coaching other people and other couples, I realised – wait a minute, this isn't only me, this phenomenon I experienced in my own life I was seeing in couples everywhere, especially in couples I was working with. With people who felt they had started to grow often times but then they would get stuck or plateau and wouldn't go any farther. I realised that the big culprit of that was that the small web of soft addictions was impeding the very progress we were working hard to get to.

We are working hard to get people to get their hearts, to reveal their feelings, to tell the truth. They would get uncomfortable they would numb that feeling with their soft addictions. Go shopping, go buy something, go watch TV, go zone out, over drink some wine that night or whatever. It was counterproductive to the whole process that we were working with and that's when I termed it soft addictions because it has that addictive feeling. We started to see that we could uncover what people really yearned for, what they hungered for and how we can meet that directly and how can we use that wonderful experience of being in a couple to meet those deeper yearnings and hunger, to provide more truth and consciousness and growth in relationships. That is my long answer to that Michele.

**Michele:** That is a beautiful answer. In a sense you said something (I am not sure if you are familiar with Imago work)

**Judith:** I know enough to be dangerous maybe!

**Michele:** You may know that the therapist really creates a clarity in which the couple can hope to face for one another. And as someone who has been in this kind of therapy, I know that my soft addictions and my husband's soft addictions did exactly what you are saying. The couple gets to a certain level and they are well supported when they are with their therapist or relationship coach and then when they are on their own they run back to their soft addiction patters.

**Judith:** Right, and then you can't figure out what's happening, what's going on.

**Michele:** Yes, it's great in here, what happens when I get back out there!

**Judith:** Because we haven't set up the lifestyle to continue that way of being outside the office.

**Michele:** And our unconscious fallback positions are just all too handy.

**Judith:** Yes, it is all default, because you've got the lifestyle set up. That night you probably watched TV or whatever – you go back into those unconscious ruts, routines and patterns and then can't figure out why there isn't a carry over value from that wonderful session.

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**Michele:** Yes, so it's keeping the value and being able to replicate how present and spacious you were for your partner in the presence of your therapist and continuing upon maintaining that same level of clarity and presence of yourself.

**Judith:** Yes, setting up your relationship that way, setting up your routines that way. The therapist is holding a conscious state for you. There are different ground rules in that session about truth, intimacy and how one speaks. You're awake, you're purposeful, and you're intentional during that time but how do you then create your life outside of that. How do you replicate that? How do you keep it conscious and not numb it going from rut to routine to kind of mindless habits? Well that's how you do it with the skills of overcoming these soft addictions and focussing on the greater life of more of what really matters, then doing the work you need to do, to design your life, your days, your hours, your time, your activities that add to your consciousness rather than distract.

**Michele:** Let's talk to the therapist. How might a therapist delve into some of the knowledge of soft addictions as they support a couple taking imago back to their daily life?

**Judith:** I think the discussion we are just having – being that you can have imago and that's what happens here. I can have great sessions with people where tenderness and open hearts and awareness is beautiful to behold. That in itself has value, but if we don't help them find a way to continue that. I think part of it is pointing out that yes; it's great that that just happened in this session with all of us focussed on it. But really plan: How do we create that kind of space? What are you going to do this week to recreate this?

**Michele:** Well we are going to watch at least 5 hours of TV tonight together! We'll make sure there is plenty of ice cream in the fridge!

**Judith:** That's right, the average American watches 4 hours of TV each day ... and that's average. So you have to expect that people are going to do mindless things. It's not just those in our office, it's us too. Really expect that that is how people live and let's be aware that there are a lot of forces that are going to be counter to what you are opening up in your session with someone. There is a lot out there, a lot of the rut and routine and lifestyle that is really geared to the opposite of what we are working with. I would be interested to explore that more fully with you as we get to the questions part. Part of it is to anticipate – wait I am sending them out to the zone. They are going to go back out into the world.

There are skills that I use and other exercises and things that the couple can do. It's like OK, you're going to leave here and you're going to forget all this. A couple of days from now you're going to barely remember this happened. I think it is better to predict that that's going to happen. It's no reflection on you; it's a reflection on how people live. It's our culture; it's just what's going to happen. Given that, how do we prepare for that? How do we have that session and it not be the only time that couple spends together? Part of it is to have them plan how they can have more conscious time, how they could take a date together – whatever your strategies are. What ways they'll talk. An assignment

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that you gave them to report back on that makes it more likely that they will take time that week and try to combat the forces – whether they watch two hours of television instead of four.

You learn to add more nourishing things in your life that meet your needs rather than just try these soft addictions, which only just address your surface cravings. When you meet those deeper yearnings you naturally start subtracting those soft addictions. The couple I am talking to you about – they had the most purposeful, beautiful date. They talk about their dreams together, almost as if they were meeting again for the first time. They interview one another and they plan things together. Right now for example they are planning how they’re going to do their holidays. The husband’s mother has breast cancer and they are in a deep discussion about what that means, and how he is feeling about it and how they can be supportive of her. That is a beautiful thing to talk about. Really it’s about guiding people as to what they will do in their day-to-day life.

**Michele:** It occurs to me that there is a real-spill over factor as couples begin to look together at which soft addictions are a numbing routine, detracting from their ability to be intimate. I think in my own life, if I have been stressed out all afternoon (I work from home) so let’s imagine I have been in one of my soft addiction things where I am kind of doing work but I am also just kind of keeping busy so by the time my husband gets home I am zoned out. So if I was zoned out when he got home, what kind of ground does that make for intimacy between us?

**Judith:** It doesn’t, obviously.

**Michele:** So if we keep looking at that, if we look at how can we improve our intimacy, that’s going to improve my life as an individual as well?

**Judith:** That’s right. That’s the place to start. You create more space, you become more available. Coming home becomes another experience for him on a daily basis. One woman that I worked with, she loved to read. She would get into it very addictively; she would read it like eye candy. She had a masters degree in literature, but she started to read romance novels to get away from her troubles of a pretty stressful time in her job. One night she was reading a romance novel in bed. She was coming up to a steamy scene. Her lovely husband had turned to her to talk to her and made advances to be with her sexually and more intimately. He was cuddling her hoping it would advance to more and she said, “Not tonight honey, I’m reading”. It’s like – I just turned down the real thing so I can read about it! What is that about!

**Michele:** A woman obsessed.

**Judith:** She realised there was some things she wanted to clear with her husband. Some uncommunicated issues, a high degree of framing and responsibility. Rather than do that she started hiding out. Once she realised that, she thought, this is ridiculous, I am doing virtual rather than real here.

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**Michele:** Let's go to that area. That is one of the soft addiction patterns in couples. It seems like sexual both avoidance and obsession. Clearly there is pornography and adultery outside of the relationship but even within the relationship. How do couples sometimes use one another or avoid one another as they depend on other feelings? How do we work with that?

**Judith:** Yes, every time we are doing that, we lose the potential of sex and physical intimacy being something that brings you closer and helps you communicate more fully. It turns into something else and loses the magic and evolving opportunity that hopefully it's intended to be.

Soft addictions are interesting because there are four categories. One of them is activities. The things you do and that could be sexual sessions, flirting, and pornography or couples that are masturbating or something like that. There is also avoidance, which are the things you don't do. Not having sex, not being intimate, not getting into situations that lead you that way, or pushing it away, dealing with the anger or upset. Or then there is also the addiction to things. That could even be sexual toys and this could be an enhancement or even a barrier to real intimacy for some people. Then moods can also be a soft addiction for some people.

We know sex addictions can also become a heart addiction and can be very compelling. So in the whole sexual arena you can see what happens instead of being able to be in touch with your heart and your feelings and your yearnings and what you want. To be able to talk about what you want sex for. Is it to feel affirmed, potent or to feel reassured, to express your love or to have that sense of union? There are deeper hungers that we all have, and sex can be one of the avenues to meet those hungers. The deeper hungers are the kind of things I just said. To know you exist, to be loved, to be loving, to matter, to make contact, to be seen, to be understood, to be part of something bigger than yourself, the experience of divine union. Sex, sexuality and full intercourse of all mind, body and spirit can lead us to touching deeper, pure more magnificent hungers.

Often we focus on the surface and never meet those deeper yearnings. It becomes more of an addictive pattern. I see it playing out in the couples I am working with. I have several men right now that are admitting their compulsive masturbation. I'm not saying masturbation is bad but they were going to that rather than deal with their relationship issues. I have men that are supporting one another. It is really great. Looking at the pornography and masturbation addictions. That's what we are calling it because they know they are using it to avoid dealing with their feelings of vulnerability, their fears of non-performance. It's just a lot easier to go fantasising, get rid of the tension in their bodies and not have to deal with the tenderness and the vulnerability of the relationship.

They are looking underneath at what they are really hungry for. They are starting to see how they really want more reassurance, they want to know they are wanted and desired, that they are worthy – those deeper messages they want to get. They are now learning to speak that more directly to their wives. Their wives don't feel manipulated, they feel joined. They feel like they have this deep union. It's much easier when you feel relaxed and open. It's quite beautiful where this work is taking them.

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I have another woman who is avoiding sex rather than speaking about what she feels in her heart. When she does that she finds her husband provides a beautiful space for her, they are speaking more, there is more trust and she relaxes. I have other people that flirt outside their relationship. They are flirting trying to get their sense of attractiveness from other people and not taking that back into the relationship. Most people I am working with around this arena are couples who have seen when these things come up they are over-flirting, they are over-masturbating, they are into pornography too much, they are over fixated on sex toys. They are leering too much and this kind of thing. They are starting to see this is a signal that: I hunger for something that I am not getting right now. And how can I take this back into my relationship, and tell the truth about it, and discover those deeper hungers and how can I meet them directly with my wife or my husband rather than the surface ways that are not really meeting them.

It is a very ripe area to look at soft addictions and the tenderness underneath that, and the deeper hungers that these soft addictions represent and the opportunities for couples to tend to those yearnings with one another. That is when real communion takes place.

**Michele:** I think someone may have a question.

**Jane:** My question was about a young man that I have just started working with in my practice. He is involved in a relationship but has so much shame with reference to an earlier sex addiction during his teen years - masturbation and pornography. I would like to recommend something to him to read that will ease some of the shame.

**Michele:** A book! (laughs) There must be something more. Judith, if you could speak to that.

**Judith:** The book is called “There Must Be More Than This – Finding more life, love and meaning by overcoming you soft addictions.” Many, many, many people have used it for exactly the kind of issue you are talking about. In fact I get emails from men who are reading the book and are getting a deeper understanding of why they are doing what they are doing. There are some pretty compassionate and powerful and potent skills that I am talking about in the book. There are several skills. First there is the “why”. Why am I doing this? Why am I pursuing this? Where does this pattern begin for me? What am I hoping to get out of it? You start to understand why you are doing what you are doing.

Another one is starting to identify your spiritual hungers as opposed to surface wants. What we’re really hungry for at a deeper yearning level that is played out in sex addictions and how can we meet those yearnings directly so that it doesn’t get into the compulsive pattern. Once you get to the “why” and your motivation has some logic to it - it was a mistaken attempt to meet a need. That it is not a sin but you didn’t know a better way to try and meet a deeper yearning.

**Jane:** This young man was referred by a previous therapist to SAA. I think in some ways that was more traumatising than anything.

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**Judith:** I think twelve step programs are phenomenal. Look at the impact they have, they are an amazingly beautiful thing. We have worked with people who have been in it, for sex addictions and they told me that they used it in a way to feed their sex addictions. By hearing other people's stories, by flirting with other people that are there, taking advantage of things. I know some good success stories too, but I know some people who have a problem with that forum.

**Jane:** Particularly if the addiction has to do with masturbation and/or pornography.

**Judith:** It's not like that doesn't happen and everybody has had some degree of experience with it. I worked with a guy who would masturbate in his office bathroom 3-5 times a day to deal with his anxiety. He obviously knew it was an issue.

Internet pornography particularly, with such easy access is a real issue. A lot of people are in trouble with their jobs because of it. There is so many ways to get it; from phone sex, to Internet sex to chat rooms, these alternative realities that you can get into – trying to meet these deeper hungers and they never can do it. They don't touch your heart; they don't help you feel seen and valued. It is just a mistaken attempt so it deserves compassion and understanding to understand why.

**Michele:** There is something so beautiful I got from your book and working with you. An opposite sense of that feeling – you filthy, worthless thing, I can't believe you'd do that, and at the office of all places! I have shame about my turning to cookies to help me deal with my stress. But the perspective that I repeatedly get from you is how beautifully that you adapt it to your hungers, that you found a way, you didn't actually feed your hungers, like that man who masturbated his way through his teen years but he got through them.

**Judith:** Yes, it was what he knew to do to deal with his feelings. If he had a better way to do it, he probably would have. Especially youngsters and teenagers – they don't have a lot of resources and training and support to deal with the huge things that are going on in life. So he did the best he knew how, given what was available to him. Now he can make some other choices. My book is not about shame. We get enough of that. That is what drives you to more soft addictions I think – feeling bad about yourself. It is important to realise WHY you are doing it and change it because there is a cost. We are not going to deny that part. But it is not a sin. It is a totally understandable impulse to try and take care of ourselves. He wanted something.

He really hungered for something; whether it was relieving anxiety, or to feel alive. There was something he was trying to get from that. Until he knows what that is and until he can find better ways to touch that he will still keep doing that same pattern. You can't just stop it without unlocking it. I think that is what I am trying to offer here – how to unlock it. Not just going cold turkey. Not just stopping yourself from doing it. That doesn't do anything, that doesn't reach the reason you are doing that behaviour in the first place. WHY are you doing it? What are you trying to meet? What can you do instead that really touches it, instead of willpower or cold turkey. We don't need to take things away without offering a better solution (not that this is about offering a better solution)

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**Listener:** Would you say something about the couple that comes in, where the wife has the hunger and the husband insists he doesn't. He is into his addictions whatever they are. But he persists in being totally out of touch so will try to charm her, spend more time with her, talk to her but really he isn't in touch with himself.

**Judith:** That happens a lot. It can happen the other way too. What I always remember is he does have that hunger. There is no human being that does not have these deeper hungers. There is not a soul that does not hunger for connection or intimacy or a sense of union or something higher or communion or family or community or any of those things. There is no one that doesn't want that. That is just a universal truth of every single human being. I don't have to pound him over the head with that, but it is important to remind myself and not buy into the denial when I am working with someone. The other thing is, he doesn't have to go there.

If she is the one that has that deeper hunger and can name it, then she will have to take the initiative. What I have found is rather than try and talk him into it or point out what's going on, the one, (in this case the wife) that's more aware of it, learns to not make him wrong and speaks more about what it is she is hungering for, what she is missing, what her desires are, and it often it creates a different atmosphere. And as she adds more things to their daily life, to their family life it gives an alternative experience, he naturally sees that there is a benefit to some of these other things.

I find not trying to change him but try and change some of the situations and the atmosphere and accept some of the denial and defensiveness as part of the process. Why would he need to deny and defend so much unless he did have an issue?

**Listener:** That's a great answer. If the wife could give up the anger about it and just speak about it instead of beating him over the head with it.

**Judith:** That just gets him more upset and more entrenched in his soft addictions to deal with the upset. So a lot of the time it is counter-productive.

**Listener:** I am a middle aged white woman and this is a young black hip guy and his wife. I have been trying unique ways to relate because he doesn't identify with me, obviously.

**Judith:** Right. Then it is even more telling to get underneath to something we can all relate to. He wants something; he wouldn't be in your office if he didn't want something.

**Listener:** He cares about his wife.

**Judith:** Then that matters. If he can connect with caring for his wife and if they can find a way to connect through that and he can see that she doesn't feel cared about, it might be enough to help. That might be enough and that he will do it for that reason.

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**Listener:** Yes, he is doing that for that reason and he is trying. He is a silent person. There are very few people he likes. He has been like that his whole life. Not connected with family, although they seem like good people. He is doing it for her and that concerns me a little.

**Judith:** Well it probably should. But sometimes I find – where would they start? As long as they get a bigger reason after that. He’s saying right now he is doing it for her. We don’t know if that is the whole truth. It is what he is aware of right now. Maybe something will spark beyond that. Sometimes we do something for someone else. I know some people take better care of themselves for their children or they’re pregnant and then they learn that that is actually the right thing to do for themselves. Sometimes you don’t care enough about yourself to do it, but you do care about another person and I don’t see anything wrong with starting there. You’re right to be concerned, you don’t want it to be some dependent pleasing pattern over time. As a place to begin – why not go with that?

**Jane:** I have to leave this call, but I wanted to say – this is so helpful. I really appreciate this kind of input on these cases. I definitely want to get your book and I never thought of interpreting this kid’s behaviour as really adaptive with reference to his mother’s physical abuse and loneliness. Thank you so much.

**Judith:** I am so glad.

**Michele:** Next week, Judith will be back and you can bring other cases and questions. She also offers training. I will be going to Chicago in January for a two-week series on soft addictions that can be very helpful to therapists themselves and those whom they are working with.

**Judith:** Thanks Michele. I would love for any of you to do that. We have many Imago therapists who are adding this aspect to their work. They are finding it is a good parallel and helps them unlock things and helps them build their practices in different ways. We have a whole track to help coaches and therapists build their businesses as well.

Contact No. for Judith Wright to attend training in Chicago: 866 MOREU or 312 329 1200.

Online Course also available: [www.thereustbemore.com](http://www.thereustbemore.com). You can look at the training, you can sign up for things, you can get our free ezine, you can ask me questions and most importantly you can sign up for the trainings and we can play even more fully together.

Order the book from [www.thereustbemore.com](http://www.thereustbemore.com) and get extra support with the book.

**Michele:** We probably have time for one more question or case study today. Then I would like to invite you back next week. You might be thinking about other things you would like to bring or other friends you would like to bring to the call to keep diving into how soft addictions work with couples. We’ll begin to curb on the margin, cut down on the soft addiction behaviour and build in more things that feed those hungers that were the reasons we started with the soft addictions in the first place.

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**Listener2:** I'd like to commend you Judith on the whole way you deal with soft addictions. It is giving us Imago therapists a very comprehensive way of helping people close exit and transform the energy that goes into the exit into intimacy.

**Judith:** That was beautifully put. Thank you. It is closing the exit, so that you have that time, money, energy consciousness to develop more love and connection.

**Listener3:** What I really appreciated Judith, was your going into your own background. That was such a marvellous beginning.

**Judith:** Thank you. It's always vulnerable to do that. I appreciate the feedback. If we can't be genuine then how can we expect that from the people we are serving?

**Listener3:** It sounds like quite a deep, complex and long journey that you have been on?

**Judith:** It really has been and it continues to be. I am learning more and more all the time. It is really learning to live life as an adventure and an evolving one of intimacy and meaning. That's what I want for all of us.

**Michele:** I'd like to invite you all back for more of that model. That is one thing I admired about you Judith is your willingness to be vulnerable and present and co voyage with those you are working with.

**Judith:** Isn't that what we are coaching our couples to do? Thanks for the reflection.

**Kathleen (California):** I have appreciated this presentation. Our family goes up to the mountains every year at Christmas time. My kids have grown and there are grandchildren. It gets harder and harder to get these live, intimate connections that are not part of this thing your talking about where people are zoning out in front of the TV set while we are in the mountains.

**Judith:** Right. That one bothers me greatly. It is such a right opportunity for the right stuff and it ends up being a zone out thing. We can consider that next week and talk about that more. I am also going to be posting on my website a lot of hints on how to have a conscious holiday of MORE. We can explore that more fully next week.

*(Closing)*

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