

## Episode 024

## How Showing Compassion Helps Those Suffering With Autoimmune Diseases!

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**DIANA HIMES:** Welcome, welcome, welcome to today's episode of the **Tough Love for Sensitive Souls** podcast! I'm your host, Diana Himes. I've got another exciting topic planned for us today, so grab a beverage, your notebook, and get comfy!

Hey there Sensitive Soul, I'm so glad you're here! This is the first episode in a 4-part series about the correlation between Highly Sensitive People and Autoimmune Diseases. In this episode you'll discover the **importance of how showing compassion helps those suffering with autoimmune diseases**. You'll also learn about the complexities of these conditions, emphasizing the urgent need for empathy and awareness.

Before we begin, let me start off by saying that I've been diagnosed with [Sjogren's Syndrome](#), [Fibromyalgia](#), and [Subacute Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus](#) (SCLE) which all fall under the category autoimmune diseases. I'm not going to dig deep into any of these, you can do that with the links I'm providing in this transcript.

What I will say is that Sjogren's is like Systemic Lupus, meaning that symptoms can look similar, but there's differences in blood test results and some symptoms. I'm at higher risk for Systemic Lupus, which can have more severe symptoms, because of Sjogren's and SCLE.

I believe **it's crucial to shed light on the silent struggle of those who are battling these conditions every day**. It's important to create empathy and understanding inside and outside our community. Autoimmune diseases, affecting millions around the globe, remain somewhat of a mystery that challenges medical experts and often leaves those affected feeling isolated and misunderstood.

**It's like playing whack a mole because the symptoms come and go making it harder to get a real diagnosis**. It took 10 years for my Doctors to figure it out! I know that our collective compassion can truly make a difference in their lives!

Before digging deeper into the emotional struggles faced by individuals with autoimmune diseases, it's important to understand what happens with these conditions. In simple terms, autoimmune diseases happen when **our body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own healthy tissues.**

For me that means my saliva glands, tear ducts, nasal passages, skin, and other areas of my body are more dry than most people. Before I moved to South Carolina, I lived in Illinois and suffered from sinus infections all the time because of the heat running during the long winters. I also had to deal with excruciating joint and muscle pain from the trauma I carried in my neck and shoulders, which caused nerve issues in my arms, plus skin issues from the sun! I was miserable and nothing seemed to help!

Autoimmune diseases encompass a wide range of conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, type 1 diabetes, and many others. They affect both genders, all ages, and various ethnicities, with no discrimination. **Autoimmune diseases impact approximately 23.5 million people in the United States** alone, and their prevalence continues to rise. That's not counting those who still struggle with symptoms and haven't been diagnosed yet.

Behind the staggering statistics are the untold stories of these warriors dealing with the invisible burdens of autoimmune diseases. **Their lives are forever altered by debilitating symptoms, unpredictable flare-ups, and the constant fear of the unknown.**

Imagine waking up each morning, unsure whether you'll have the energy to tackle the day or if your body will betray you once again. Individuals with autoimmune diseases often face chronic pain, extreme fatigue, cognitive difficulties, and a multitude of other symptoms that fluctuate in intensity.

But the struggles extend beyond physical problems. **Autoimmune conditions can significantly impact mental health causing anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation.** Relationships may strain as friends and family struggle to comprehend the invisible battles of those diagnosed with these diseases.

In the face of these types of challenges, **empathy becomes a beacon of hope for anyone living with autoimmune diseases.** It's crucial to try and understand what we go through, choosing compassion rather than judgment!

Empathy, the ability to walk in someone else's shoes, helps you see the daily triumphs and hardships faced by those with autoimmune conditions. **It allows you to see the courage they demonstrate while navigating a complex and often overwhelming health journey.**

Promoting awareness and fostering compassion is not just an act of kindness; it's essential for their well-being. When you empathize with someone else's challenges, you create a supportive environment where their struggles are acknowledged and they feel validated and understood.

So, how can you actively contribute to a more compassionate society for those affected by autoimmune diseases? Let's break the silence surrounding these conditions! By sharing stories, raising awareness,

and engaging in open conversations, **we can eliminate the stigma and misconceptions associated with autoimmune diseases!**

Educating yourself about these conditions and their impact is equally important especially if you know someone who's been diagnosed with an autoimmune disease . By understanding the challenges they face, you can offer support, adapt environments to their needs, and become allies in their journey toward improved health and well-being.

Understanding autoimmune diseases goes beyond medical knowledge. It requires you to tap into the depths of your compassion, to **extend a hand of empathy to those who fight battles you may not always see.**

Let's remember that a single act of compassion has the power to change lives. By embracing empathy and raising awareness, you can help create a world where individuals with autoimmune diseases no longer feel alone or misunderstood.

**Join me in making a difference!** Together let's build a community that values compassion, supports those in need, and holds space for the struggles faced by individuals who are suffering in silence!

Even though us sensitive souls are built for more empathy, I know it can be hard to do it without taking on their energy. Let these journal prompts give you some insight into ways you can relate to what they're going through. Write freely and honestly letting your thoughts and emotions flow onto the paper.

- Reflect on a time when you felt misunderstood or overlooked. How did it make you feel? Consider how this experience relates to those who suffer in silence with chronic illnesses or autoimmune conditions.
- Think about a time when you may have unintentionally judged someone's invisible health struggles. How can you cultivate more compassion and grace in your interactions moving forward?
- Reflect on the importance of listening and validating someone's experiences, even if you cannot fully understand their pain. How can you enhance your listening skills and be a source of support for those with chronic illnesses or autoimmune conditions?
- When someone showed you compassion during a difficult period in your life, how did their support make a difference? How can you pay it forward and extend compassion to others facing silent battles with their health?

Well that, Sensitive Soul, brings me to the FAQ of the week...**What are some ways I can better relate to and support someone who suffers in silence with a chronic illness?**

When it comes to relating to someone who suffers in silence with a chronic illness, empathy and understanding are essential. You can cultivate a mindful approach, engage in compassionate communication, and offer unwavering support. Here's a few ways to get started...

1. **Practice mindful listening.** Give them your undivided attention, maintaining eye contact and an open posture. Show genuine interest in their experiences, concerns, and emotions. Here's an

example of what to say when they share their story..."This must be so challenging for you. Your strength and resilience are truly inspiring. Please know that I'm here to listen and support you in any way I can."

2. **Educate yourself.** Take the initiative to educate yourself about their illness. Learn about its symptoms, treatments, and potential impact on their daily life. By gaining knowledge, you demonstrate a genuine commitment to understanding their experiences. Use your knowledge as a foundation for empathetic conversations.
3. **Validate their feelings.** Acknowledge their emotions and validate their experiences, even if you haven't personally experienced what they're going through. Avoid downplaying their struggles or offering unsolicited advice. Instead, offer words of empathy and validation. Say something like..."It's completely understandable that you feel frustrated and overwhelmed at times. Your feelings are valid, and I want you to know that I'm here for you, no matter what."
4. **Offer practical support.** Ask if there are specific tasks or responsibilities you can help with, such as running errands, cooking a meal, or accompanying them to medical appointments. Even small gestures can make a significant impact on their well-being and alleviate some of their burdens.

Relating to someone with a chronic illness requires a mindful approach, active listening, empathy, and practical support. By cultivating understanding and showing compassion, you can create a meaningful connection and offer invaluable support to those who suffer in silence. Remember, **your presence and willingness to learn and empathize can make a tremendous difference in their lives.**

Remember this is the first episode in a 4-part series about chronic illness and highly sensitive people. Join me next week when I unveil some of the more common symptoms of autoimmune conditions and how they can impact every day life!

And that brings us to the end of this week's show! Now it's time for you to decide what you're going to do differently this week. Take 10 minutes right now and get started answering the journal prompts.

If you found this episode inspiring, don't forget to share it with other sensitive souls. Together, **let's ignite a movement of empowered individuals who believe in their infinite potential!**

Thank you so much for spending this time with me. I hope you got a few new ideas for doing things differently. Remember, **you're the only one in charge of your life regardless of what anyone else says or does.**

Join me next week for another episode of **Tough Love for Sensitive Souls**. Until then, don't forget that you've got everything you need to get anything you want!