

There Must Be More Than This ...

An Interview with Judith Wright
Author of, *There Must Be More Than This:*
Finding More Life, Love and Meaning
By Overcoming Your Soft Addictions

Judith Wright is an educator, life coach and seminar leader who left her private practice to co-found the Wright Institute for Lifelong Learning where people learn to fulfill their potential in all areas of their lives – work, relationships, self and spirit. She coined the term “Soft Addictions” as part of her groundbreaking approach. Her proven methods help people to greater life, love, and meaning by overcoming the ways we numb ourselves with seemingly harmless activities and routines that diminish the quality of our lives. In her new book, ***THERE MUST BE MORE THAN THIS: Finding More Life, Love and Meaning By Overcoming Your Soft Addictions (Broadway, April 2003)***, she speaks to the challenge of finding meaning and fulfillment that so many of us face every single day of our lives – knowing there is something more, yet not knowing how to find it. In all of her work Judith guides people to their deeper yearnings and how to fulfill them, showing them a powerful path of liberation.

It seems the concept of your book touches on something WE ALL can relate to ... the sense that there is something more to life. You even capitalize the “M.” But can you explain what exactly is this “More?”

The answer varies from person to person and you’ll find ideas and tools throughout the book to help define the “More” for yourself. But, in a nutshell, I’d say we discover more life, love and meaning as we commit ourselves to taking the journey to *discover* More. I don’t think More is a destination – it is a decision and a journey to fulfill our deepest hungers. By meeting our deeper needs directly and releasing soft addictions, we are more fulfilled. By not spending so much time, energy and money on insidious soft addiction routines we have the wherewithal and resources to pursue more meaningful activities. We feel more awake, alive, and present in our own lives. We spend more time developing our gifts and talents and making a difference in the world.

And what is a soft addiction?

This, too, can take many forms. Essentially, they are time wasters, things we do habitually and indiscriminately, mostly to get away from uncomfortable feelings in a fruitless attempt to fill our emptiness. It could be watching too much television, shopping, sitting around feeling sorry for ourselves, fantasizing, flipping through catalogs for hours on end, sitting around eating ...

How did you begin to develop your expertise on soft addiction and how to overcome them?

As a child, I kept feeling there must be more to life. I grew up in a factory town, where most people spent their time zoned out on an assembly line. When they'd go home, they would look for ways to chase away the tedium by watching TV, hanging out, comparing rumors about plant colleagues, and using other diversions. To me it seemed like no one was home, that the people around me were trapped in limiting behaviors that led them nowhere. It was almost as if they were sleep walking. And that I was too.

Yet you also enjoyed creative childhood pursuits like dance, music lessons, camp and girl scouts, various clubs, reading, writing and acting out plays ...

Yes, even though my family was unusually active and I was consistently first in my class, I felt I was living in two worlds. When not deeply engaged in creative activities, or numbed out by the TV, I felt empty. My heart hurt. I often felt hollow or as if I were some sort of wispy ghost, barely existing. I knew something was not right, but not what was wrong. I just felt life was, somehow, supposed to be different. And it wasn't just me. I could see the people around me experiencing the same syndrome. They were doing things that should be fun yet they seemed so joyless... or they would speak to each other yet not really connect. I just knew something was missing in the way people lived.

How did soft addictions manifest in your own life?

Food had a powerful hold on my time and energy. I devoured recipes in magazines and frequently fantasized about food, loved cooking, and looked forward to eating. I used this and other activities – biting my nails, procrastinating, zoning out over my textbooks. I didn't know at that time it was my spiritual hunger that needed feeding. So I did what I could to swallow my pain and push my feelings out of my awareness.

What was your awakening?

One day I made the "One Decision" that I would no longer mask the hunger by filling the empty hole within with meaningless, anxious activities. I decided to do what I could to feed the hunger directly. I discovered a deeper me under the soft addictions – someone who cared deeply, wanted more out of life, had gifts and talents to develop and share. I learned to be with myself rather than avoiding myself with limiting habits; I started to be aware of my feelings more, rather than numb them. I learned to honor my feelings and go toward them rather than running away. I also began to add more nourishing, life sustaining foods and activities that brought self-pampering, pleasure and laughter to my life. As I added nourishing behaviors I noticed the soft addictions lost their allure, and their grip, on me.

So you were not exactly an overnight success story?

Not at all. It's been a journey of many milestones. The road to More is a series of highly conscious and deeply felt steps. First and foremost was the step I call the "One Decision." This meant taking a stand in my life for fullness and consciousness, an unwillingness to live my life unconsciously. I made the commitment to be more awake and present, and help others do the same.

Why do so many of us have a challenge connecting with "the More" to life?

Most of us are so locked into our routines that we don't even know More is possible. Even if we appear successful, inside there lingers doubt and we don't feel fulfilled. Consciously or unconsciously we believe that "this is all there is." Soft addictions are an alluring, seductive aspect of our culture – they are easy to attain and socially acceptable, they are even encouraged in many cases. Yet they are lethal to the spirit. We've observed that people who stall in their personal growth work often have counterproductive soft addictions that stand in their way of growth and having the life they say they want. It can be a simple thing, such as watching TV instead of finishing a project.

How do we reduce, or eliminate, the insidious grip of soft addictions?

Once we recognize them, these limiting beliefs can be challenged and replaced. When we learn new behaviors and break through to higher levels of consciousness and love, we can fulfill the deeper spiritual hunger within. As we get past our superficial material wants and instant gratification we connect to a deeper part of ourselves, as well as to others, and the universe.

It seems like facing our fear, and our feelings, is the key to finding "More" to life.

When we face our feelings, we learn to use the information they offer. We become more authentic, in touch with our world and ourselves. The temporary reprieve of numbing ourselves and zoning out doesn't compare to the richness and adventure of a life of More.

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