

## **For the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)**

If you feel things deeply; are easily overstimulated by outer activity; need to thoroughly process information, events, feelings, and thoughts; and are highly intuitive to signals and stimuli in the environment, you may be highly sensitive. In our world, this can sound negative, like someone is too tender to deal with reality or too fragile to manage themselves. However, being highly sensitive is an inherent trait - not one earned or asked for - but one that is part of your temperament and can be harnessed for good.

I'm especially skilled to work with you because I'm HSP too. And you don't need to hear my whole story, but I'm writing this to assure you that if you find yourself highly sensitive, you can thrive. It may take some processing of the past and reframing events or reactions that you previously blamed yourself for. It will mean understanding your trait as a gift, even if it comes with some quirks that you'll need to deal with. But it's possible to embrace this part of who you are and live fully in it.

### **A Little Bit of My Story**

My spouse muses that before I married him, my parents told him I was "different." For decades, I truly believed that my way of reacting to stimuli, my deep inner life, keen intuition, abhorrence of violence, need for a lot of solitude and downtime, and the way I had to process the wazoo out of everything (including spending hours shopping for something really simple) meant there was something wrong with me. I was constantly criticizing myself for this sensitivity and way of being in the world.

Of course, how we view and live out being HSP is impacted by our family system and the community we were raised in. I was lucky; during my early years, it was easy to be highly sensitive without knowing what that was. I loved make-believe play, and could be alone for hours, reading in my bedroom or tromping around in the woods. My parents were usually fine with all of that and I had a strong group of friends, was active in school, and loved learning.

It wasn't until I got to college that being highly sensitive clashed with reality. I loved going to bed early, solitude, and organizing my days so that I wasn't overwhelmed. College, however, meant a noisy dorm, shared with a roommate, and academic demands on top of working part-time. I developed anxiety and insomnia. That began many years chastising myself for who I inherently was.

It was not until recently that I stumbled upon several websites for HSPs, read voraciously, and started to understand and fully accept that I am highly sensitive.

This has allowed me to now reflect back on many life events and see them through a different, more empowering lens. I wish I'd known about the Highly Sensitive trait earlier.

Elaine Aron is the founding pioneer who fully developed and extensively wrote about Highly Sensitive Persons and her website, <https://hsperson.com/>, has an amazing array of resources. She carefully designed a self-test: <https://hsperson.com/test/highly-sensitive-test/> that will help you know if you have the trait and her blog posts and books validate and normalize life for about 15-20% of the population.

### **Resources**

There's so much out there now, but please don't spend hours combing the Internet - you might get overstimulated! Start with one or two and see what you learn and can relate to.

**Books:** All by Elaine Aron, Ph.D (While she's written seven books for HSPs; I'd start with these.)

- The Highly Sensitive Person: How to Thrive When the World Overwhelms You
- The Highly Sensitive Person In Love
- The Highly Sensitive Person's Workbook

### **Websites/Online Resources**

<https://highlysensitiverefuge.com>

<https://simplelionheartlife.com/highly-sensitive-people-need-minimalism/>

<https://www.expansiveheart.com/hsp-resources>

<https://www.hsp.world/how-highly-sensitive-people-can-manage-anxiety/>

<http://www.lifeworkshelp.com/HSP-Newsletter/summer-2021-hsp-highlights-insights-so-much-to-share/>

**Podcasts** (Disclaimer: Listening to podcasts isn't my favorite way of learning so I haven't listened to all of these. But youou might find them helpful.)

Gathering Gold: <https://conscious-transitions.com/gathering-gold-podcast/>

(Sheryl Paul is the co-creator of this podcast and her website, Conscious Transitions (<https://conscious-transitions.com/>) includes many good blog posts and resources for HSPs. Her book, The Wisdom of Anxiety is worth reading.

<http://highlysensitiveperson.net/hspodcast/>

<https://unapologeticallysensitive.com/unapologetically-sensitive/>