

## Survive & Thrive Guide for the Highly Sensitive

"You are too sensitive", "You are so emotional", "Lighten up", "Get over it", "What is wrong with you?" "Why are you avoiding me?" Any of these statements sound familiar? I heard this all the time as a child and throughout my adult life. These comments ate at every part of my being and eventually led to an ultimate disconnect from my soul. I was given medications so I wouldn't cry anymore, eventually I didn't feel. I look at photos of myself back then and I was a shell of who I am. I was just a body operating on auto-pilot just trying to get through the day. This may sound drastic to some, but nearly 20% of the population feel the same way I do. I am not talking about depression, I am talking about being highly sensitive.

Years ago, someone I love dearly gave me a book called "The Highly Sensitive Person" by Dr. Elaine Aron. I took an assessment before reading the book to see if the topic would apply to me. After the first few questions I couldn't wait to dive in.

### Here are some examples from the assessment:

- Other people's moods affect me.
- I find myself needing to withdraw during busy days, into bed or into a darkened room or any place where I can have some privacy and relief from stimulation.
- I am easily overwhelmed and affected by caffeine, bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics, and loud noises.
- I have a rich, complex inner life and am moved by arts or music.
- I get rattled when I have a lot to do in a short amount of time.
- When people are uncomfortable in a physical environment I tend to know what needs to be done to make it more comfortable (like changing the lighting or the seating).
- I am affected by violent movies and TV shows.
- I become unpleasantly aroused when a lot is going on around me.
- Being very hungry creates a strong reaction in me, disrupting my concentration or mood.
- When I was a child, my parents or teachers seemed to see me as sensitive or shy.

To take the full test from the *Highly Sensitive Person* by Elaine N. Aron, Ph. D. [click here](#)

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As I read Aron's book and researched this trait more, I realized there was nothing wrong with me. In fact, tens of thousands of people had this trait. Being a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) is not a disorder, it is innate and has been found in over 100 species. This trait is part of our survival strategy. Our brains actually work a little differently by taking in all that is around us and processing on a deeper level before taking action. Unfortunately, our society doesn't value sensitivity so many of us have grown up feeling weak or like something was wrong with us.

It is essential to develop an awareness of this trait because if you do not fall on the Highly Sensitive scale, chances are your spouse, a loved one, or even your child does and your actions can negatively effect them. Once we see this as an amazing trait and not a disorder, we can utilize this gift and benefit ourselves and others.

**Seeing this as a strength and not a weakness has been instrumental in my life.** It has provided great benefits both professionally and personally. **I am extremely empathetic.** I can often tell how someone feels just by being in a room with them. I don't even have to look at their expression or body language, I can feel it. I literally "feel" their emotions in my body. This can greatly benefit the healers and helpers of the world like nurses, doctors, teachers, and therapists. However, if you do not protect your own feelings and energy, you can find yourself struggling.

Those of us who are **HSP's are often very creative. Our attention to detail often results in people calling us "perfectionists"**. This quality has gotten me very far in my life both personally and professionally. We often "see" projects before even starting them and our minds race with ideas. We often get extremely excited when working on projects we love.

**HSPs have great emotional awareness and can really use it to their benefit when it comes to their own health.** We often "feel" our emotions in our bodies. Physical pain can be more intense and we often say things like "I feel so deeply". I have become extremely connected in mind, body, and spirit. So much so, that if my knees or lower back start to hurt, I know it's usually due to emotions or fear. Knee pain can be the fear of moving forward. Back pain is often the fear of supporting oneself.

**HSPs are the unifiers of the world. They are often the ones that bring connectedness amongst groups and the community.** Because we feel the emotions of others and are touched by their stories, their stories become part of us. This has helped me step into my purpose more. I feel a responsibility to share my gifts and help the world around me. We are all one and HSPs can help bridge that connection and make the world a better place.



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**Let's Look at Ways that You Can Survive and Thrive! Here are 10 Steps You Can Start Taking:**

## **1. Ask "Are these feelings mine?"**

When I feel emotions out of nowhere, I often stop and ask myself "Are these feelings mine?" or "What is this about?" When I am around others, I can quickly pick up other people's emotions. This happened after leaving the movie "Annie". I had a wonderful time at the theater with my kids but when I got in the car I was overwhelmed with sadness. I went from laughing and smiling to complete despair within minutes. It made no sense. I sat in the car recalling what transpired in the last ten minutes for my mood to drastically change like it did. That's when I realized, my feelings weren't mine. On our way out of the theater, a child had been crying and the parents were fighting about it. It was so disturbing, especially after such a great feel-good movie.

I can often feel in my body when I am taking on someone's energy. My jaw clenches, I start to bounce, and get tense. This happens often when my husband or kids are struggling. I remind myself to stay in a place of love and to not take on their energy. I often repeat in my head, "This is not my energy, extend love." Too often, people take on another person's anger, frustration, or sadness and it serves no greater good. We need to hold a place of love and positivity for people so we can help carry them through their struggle. Asking, "Are these feelings mine?" throughout your day when you feel out of balance can help you become more in tune with your own emotions so you are available to help yourself and others.

## **2. Carry Something to Calm You**

Don't be surprised if you see me coloring in a restaurant. This is my way of dealing with loud, public places. I carry mandala coloring books and colored pencils with me everywhere. I can get very overwhelmed in restaurants when they are crowded, loud, and have various lights and smells. The coloring helps me tune it out and center me. It also helps me connect with my kids as we wait for our meal.

I also carry various stones or coins with me. I will wear pieces of jewelry that I can hold or rub to help calm me when I feel agitated. I have necklaces with stones to protect me from negative energy. I have rings that I spin and coins and stones that I keep in my pocket so I can hold and rub. I often repeat affirmations to myself as well to help fight off any negative thoughts that may arise.



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### 3. Take Breaks!

Breaks are absolutely necessary! Plan these and take them often. Highly Sensitive People need alone time. We need time to recharge and refuel. Whenever I am at family gatherings, meetings, or social events, I will often excuse myself and go outside or to a quiet place for a few minutes to find my center and regroup. This has been one of the most important changes I have made and I will never NOT do this. I am very open with people about this so they know that I am not avoiding them. I used to get asked what was wrong with me or people would take it personally. A long time ago, I would find myself retreating to my dark bedroom and eventually was diagnosed with depression. As I look back, had I known about being an HSP, I may have been able to handle things a lot differently.

### 4. Cut Out Violence and the Negative

It's no wonder the worst days of my depression happened to be when I was a news producer. I got hired the day 9/11 happened. So for 4 years of my life, I spent 8 hours a day writing horror news stories. I then would come home and watch crime detective shows with my husband. The first step I made when I learned about being a HSP was I cut out the news and crime shows. I don't even watch TV now. When I see bad news come across my newsfeed, my body immediately responds. It serves no purpose for me. I do not need to know about it because my job is to stay in my joy and to spread more love. Love is the only thing that wins. If I watch it, it will only negatively effect me and I will not be able to shine my light as the world needs. Focus on good news and spread more of it. If you are going to watch TV, watch shows that inspire you. Use social media to spread love, not negativity.

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### 5. Watch Where You Sit

We are all made of energy and HSP's seem to attract it all. When you are out in public, be very particular about where you sit. When we go to a restaurant, my husband waits while I scan the room for the right table. We sometimes have to request a certain table or explain to the hostess that I am particular. This used to annoy my husband but now he is all for it because a bad seat in the joint can set the tone for the rest of the night. If we go to a movie or event, I also make sure to sit on the end of the row and not too close to others. I pay attention to where the heat and air conditioners are located, I take in account the lighting and the sounds around me. All of this can effect a HSP and can make a huge difference in your night out.

### 6. Beam or Bubble It

It is necessary to learn and practice emotional boundaries so you can hold a place of love and positivity for those who are struggling and not meet their energy. Too often, HSP's take on a care taking role and try to fix people and the situation. This is not helpful and serves no greater good. We also can get caught off guard in public when like I stated above at the movies and pick up on crappy energy. Before leaving the house or entering a place, imagine you are in a white beam of light or a bubble. This beam or bubble will protect you and deflect any negative energy from you but still allow you to shine your light and extend love outward.

### 7. Lighten Up on Caffeine and Sugar

The negative effects caffeine can have are not new. However, if you are a HSP, consider the negative effects to be times 10 for you! We are incredibly sensitive to caffeine and sugar. Limit to 1-2 cups or less if you can. You may notice you get very jittery and anxious and when this happens overwhelm can happen quick, especially when we are pressed for time. It can almost feel like a panic attack. This is a very simple act of self-care that can help you stay balanced and calm.

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### 8. Dim the Lights

Better yet, Kill them! The fluorescent ones anyway! When I worked in the corporate world, working under those energy-suckers was the worst! After learning about their negative effects, I finally convinced one of my bosses to allow me to turn them off and get some lamps at my desk. I immediately noticed a difference. Lighting can greatly effect a HSP so be very mindful of this, especially in your own home. They may annoy you and you don't even realize it. Take a good inventory of your work and home space by sitting quietly in various rooms and see how your body responds. Changing lighting and paint colors in my home made a huge difference for me.

### 9. Let it Move You

Highly Sensitive People are often moved by the arts and music. You may find yourself crying to a song on the radio or during a dance number. When this happens, go into. Allow the music and art to move you. This is nourishing and feeding your soul. You will often feel lighter or even inspired after. Do not apologize or feel embarrassed for crying. Tears are compliments to the artist and are incredibly healing and cleansing. Be thankful that you are able to experience this.

### 10. Let people know

It is important to let your friends and family know some of these things about you. Educate them so they can understand how to assist you or work with you. They too may have similar characteristics and not know it. Clueing people in can make gatherings and going out so much easier. It reduces anxiety for everyone. People won't misinterpret when you need to take a break from the group and they can help adjust the environment so everyone can enjoy themselves because if one person is struggling, it often affects the rest of the group...(as you already know because you are a HSP! 😊)

For more information about the Highly Sensitive Person, [click here](#). For more tips and information, make sure to follow my blog and sign up for my free emails at [www.simplykerry.com](http://www.simplykerry.com)